

A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY: CADES COVE AND THE NATIONAL PARK  
SERVICE

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by  
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## ABSTRACT

The federal government embarked on a bold and unprecedented undertaking in creating three National Parks in the heavily-populated East when Congress passed authorizing legislation in 1926. The populated areas of the new parks presented a challenge to the National Park Service (NPS), and the solution was to remove the people, taking their land through the application of eminent domain. Cades Cove, a small valley and farming community with a population of about 600 before the creation of Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP), is a valuable case study illuminating Park Service management of rural historic resources. This thesis examines how existing National Park Service policies shaped Cades Cove in the early twentieth century, and how the Service's experience there shaped historic preservation policy through the late twentieth century. The underlying policies and precedents that existed before the National Park Service took over management of the Cove in 1931 are considered along with the contemporary political, social, and technological events that impacted GSMNP and Cades Cove.

This study relies on historical research to establish a context for the Park Service's management decisions at Cades Cove and in GSMNP. Both the history of Cades Cove and the history of the National Park Service are thoroughly examined. Historical documents from the NPS, the Southern Appalachian National Park Commission, and the Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains National Park Commission provide key insights into the prevailing attitudes, politics, and personalities that affected management policy in the 1920s, '30s, and '40s. Scholarly publications and Park Service documents from the latter half of the twentieth century show how the Cades Cove experience influenced the actions of another federal agency, the

Tennessee Valley Authority, and how the lessons learned there continue to shape NPS policy.

The results of this inquiry demonstrate that after the turn of the century and before the industrialization of the South there existed a window of opportunity for the creation of National Parks in the East. Another window of opportunity opened with the arrival of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps in the Smokies. This labor enabled the recording of much of the architecture within the park, but it also sped up the destruction of buildings that was begun by the agents of the Tennessee and North Carolina park commissions. The United States' entry into World War II closed this window of opportunity as CCC labor was funneled away from park development. By erasing the physical evidence of Cades Cove's twentieth-century history, the NPS crafted a generically-appealing, "typical" pioneer scene. This feat was only possible after historic preservation became a legitimate focus of the Service and before the development of more rigorous standards in the later twentieth century. Although a false history persists at Cades Cove, it can, and should, be viewed as a physical record of a distinct moment in Park Service history. Just as park architecture built in the 1930s is considered historic because it represents a far-reaching movement in American history, the evolution of a preservation ethic as evidenced at Cades Cove can also be considered a valuable part of the historical record of our National Parks.



## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Kristen Vaughn Olson is a native of Virginia Beach, Virginia. She attended Colby College and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 2003 with a major in Art with a Studio Concentration and a minor in Anthropology. She has exhibited paintings and sculpture in juried student exhibitions at Colby College and at the Center for Maine Contemporary Art. She entered the graduate program in Historic Preservation Planning at Cornell University in 2006. Her interest in Cades Cove and the Great Smoky Mountains was sparked by a 600-mile solo hike on the Appalachian Trail in 2004.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents and to my husband, whose love and support has inspired and encouraged me.

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Special thanks to Great Smoky Mountains National Park Librarian Annette Hartigan, who helped to fit as much archival research as possible into a two-day visit to the Park archives. The author also wishes to acknowledge three scholars whose work has made the complex history of Cades Cove and the Great Smoky Mountains come alive: Durwood Dunn, Margaret Lynn Brown, and Daniel S. Pierce.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The creation of Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GSMNP) in Tennessee and North Carolina was the first time in U.S. history that vast amounts of privately-held land were purchased by state and federal governments for public use and enjoyment.<sup>1</sup> This bold act would set the stage for other large-scale public works projects. Not only was commercial forest land purchased for the park, but thousands of farms and summer home lots had to be obtained. Thousands of people were living inside the designated park boundaries, spread among dozens of hamlets and villages. These mountain communities had schools, churches, post offices, and businesses. The creation of GSMNP entailed the greatest displacement of people in national park history. Cades Cove, a farming community located in Blount County, Tennessee, in the western portion of the Park, had approximately 600 residents when the Park was authorized in 1926. Cades Cove was special in many ways: its soil was especially rich, its residents enjoyed greater prosperity than people elsewhere in the Smokies, and it would figure prominently in a series of controversies surrounding the establishment and development of the park. The Cove's special qualities and unique history make it an exceptional case study in Park Service history.

This thesis addresses the acquisition and management of Cades Cove by the Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains National Park Commission and by the National Park Service (NPS) from 1926 to 1950. The chosen period, beginning with the Congressional authorization of the Park in 1926 and ending with the early years of

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<sup>1</sup> The national parks which predate GSMNP were set aside from federal land. Acadia National Park, a noted exception, was a gift to the federal government from John D. Rockefeller Jr. and others. (John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), 238.) The Weeks Act, passed in 1911, initiated the purchase of private land by the federal government for the creation of Forest Reserves, but the purpose of these was conservation, not public enjoyment.

postwar park management, represent the most fertile years for examining park policy in the context of a growing preservation ethic within the NPS. Cades Cove provides a lens through which one can examine NPS policy during the Service's boom years. A number of factors—each worthy of scholarly attention in its own right—had a tremendous impact on the fate of the Cove, including regional and national politics, the timing of the Great Depression, and the United States' involvement in World War II. Some of the early decisions made regarding the Cove have had repercussions throughout the park system and have influenced the activities of other federal agencies in the Southern Appalachians. The purpose of this study is not to place blame for poor management decisions. In fact, it will show that, given the circumstances, missteps were unavoidable in the unprecedented undertaking that was the creation of GSMNP. This thesis instead aims to explore the ideological and practical reasons behind NPS policy in Cades Cove.

After federal authorization for the park was granted, the National Park Service continued a service-wide policy of prohibiting permanent residences within the parks. At Cades Cove, a stable, modern farming community was obliterated in the name of wilderness, and then reshaped in the image of a nineteenth-century pioneer outpost. In 2000, Daniel S. Pierce wrote that “[t]he resultant bitterness, anger, and frustration experienced by many of the inhabitants of the Smokies lingers to this day.”<sup>2</sup> The selective interpretation of history that has occurred in the Smokies in general, and in Cades Cove in particular, obscures the story of the park removals and the reality of the pre-park landscape, ultimately presenting an image of untouched wilderness dotted here and there with isolated farmsteads occupied by a culture frozen in time. Today, GSMNP is one of the most-visited national parks, and within the Park, Cades Cove is

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<sup>2</sup> Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 155.

the most popular destination, with about 2 million visitors per year.<sup>3</sup> In 2002, in fact, visitation to the Cove was “increasing three times faster than [Great Smoky Mountains National] Park visitation as a whole;” if the Cove were a separate unit of the park system, it would rank in the top ten percent of most-visited parks.<sup>4</sup> As visitation continues to increase, scholars including historians, journalists, ecologists, and geographers have begun to critically examine the effects of NPS management policies over the past century.

Research for this thesis led me to the University of Tennessee library and the McClung Historical Collection of the Knox County Public Library, both in Knoxville, and to the archive and library at GSMNP headquarters near Gatlinburg in January, 2008. The park archive held the most useful material; information gathered in Knoxville played a largely supportive role. A drive through Cades Cove on the Loop Road, with stops at each grouping of historic structures, confirmed in my mind what recent scholarship has suggested – that management policies have effectively erased the physical evidence of the Cove’s complex and layered history. In fact, I was surprised at how barren and stripped the farmsteads appeared.

I have relied on historical research to establish a context for early NPS policy in Cades Cove, from the precedents set in the earliest parks to the prevailing political climate of the Smokies region, to the consolidation of historic preservation activities at the national level within the Park Service. Park histories provided insight into the administrative history that shaped the creation of GSMNP, while NPS histories focusing on historic preservation and landscape architecture contextualized management policies. The earliest histories of the Park tended to gloss over many of

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<sup>3</sup> David Brill, “Cades Cove,” *Sightline: Resource Issues In Great Smoky Mountains National Park* 3 (2002): 1.

<sup>4</sup> Kris Christen, “Trapped in the Cove,” *Sightline: Resource Issues In Great Smoky Mountains National Park* 3 (2002): 6.



the complexities that have fascinated more recent scholars, such as the Smokies' history of Cherokee occupation and the extent to which the Park lands had been altered by logging, mining, and farming operations. Examination of period publications, including official NPS policies and directives, newspaper and journal articles, pamphlets and books, provided a key insight into the prevailing priorities and concerns of their time. The GSMNP archives contain a wealth of material, from Superintendents' Monthly Reports to personal correspondence and contemporary studies. These sources were invaluable in understanding the political atmosphere and personalities that shaped the early history of the Park.

The acquisition and demolition of Cove farmsteads was haphazard, and study of this chapter in GSMNP history is complicated by the fact that the NPS did not assume administrative control of the park until 1931, after the Tennessee and North Carolina park commissions had been working for years to secure the needed land and dispose of unwanted structures. Records of the Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains National Park Commission (TGSMNPC), held by the Tennessee State Archives, reflect the ad-hoc nature of much decision-making. These records, mostly correspondence among TGSMNPC Chair Col. David C. Chapman, his agents, and NPS officials, indicate that the NPS gave some direction to the commission, but that the variable means employed to realize the commission's goals were often left to individual agents.

Several writers have recently re-examined the history of the Smokies and GSMNP. Their work has been valuable in understanding the modern scholarly perspective on the region, which is often highly critical of the NPS. Durwood Dunn's *Cades Cove: A Southern Appalachian Community*, which draws on the author's extensive collection of Oliver family records, provides a rich history of the Cove and its people, probably the best to date. In her book *Wild East: A Biography of the Great*

*Smoky Mountains*, journalist Margaret Lynn Brown asserts that the Smokies were made a National Park in the image of the West, becoming what she terms a “Wild East.” She points out the many ways in which both history and ecology were molded to fit the ideal of a western park.

This thesis is organized both thematically and chronologically. Chapter 2 covers the history of Cades Cove from Cherokee occupation to the arrival of the Park, establishing an essential context for the chapters which follow. It describes the unique geography and geology of the Cove, both of which largely determined the Cove’s early history. It also provides the reader with an understanding of the Cove community and its values.

Chapter 3 explores NPS history and policy, with emphasis on policies and precedents that shaped the management of Cades Cove. It also addresses the special problems that arose when national parks were created in the East, and which came to a head at GSMNP – the absence of an established precedent for the large-scale acquisition of private land, the existence of thousands of residents within proposed park boundaries, and the degraded condition of cutover land. The Great Depression and New Deal programs are discussed here because of their enormous impact on national park development across the country and particularly in the new eastern parks.

Chapter 4 covers the creation of a National Park in the Smokies from early proposals through the acquisition of land and the official dedication of the Park in 1940. This section includes most of the information regarding the demolition of structures in Cades Cove by agents of the Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains National Park Commission, NPS employees, and Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees. The impact of New Deal programs, discussed in the context of the entire park service in

Chapter 3, is discussed here with specific reference to Cades Cove and other areas of GSMNP.

Chapter 5 examines NPS management policies in Cades Cove, from the earliest “hands-off” approach initiated even before the service took over administration of the Park, to the extensive plans prepared in the 1930s and 1940s. Policies of the late-twentieth century are discussed briefly because resource managers have, in some cases, striven to correct or mitigate some of the “wrongs” perpetrated by earlier administrations, or to properly carry out early plans for interpretation of Cove history. This chapter also addresses the implications of Cades Cove management policies both within and beyond the NPS, situating the Cades Cove story within the larger narrative of community displacements in the Appalachian South during the twentieth century.

Chapter 6, the Conclusion, suggests that Cades Cove be viewed as a historically significant physical record of Park Service goals and policies. It notes the limitations of this study and opportunities for future scholarship. Finally, it offers an image of a place that today is vastly changed, yet continues to draw the descendants of former residents back to their ancestral homes.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF A FARMING COMMUNITY AT CADES COVE

#### *Introduction*

The compelling history of Cades Cove is the subject of much scholarly work. This chapter will give a brief history of the Cove's development, demonstrating why this place continues to command the attention of historians, scientists, and visitors. Cades Cove was in many ways a typical southern mountain community. The white Americans who settled the Cove in the nineteenth century, displacing Cherokees who historically occupied the Smokies region, were largely of German, English, and Scots-Irish descent, and they aspired to a yeoman ideal that valued land-ownership and self-sufficiency. The first white settlers of Cades Cove benefited from moving into an area that had been partially cleared and cultivated by Native Americans, and in a few short years a thriving, if somewhat isolated, community was formed. Cades Cove kept pace with regional developments until the Civil War; throughout the life of the community its residents endeavored to improve travel to and from outside markets and neighboring communities. Like much of East Tennessee, Cades Cove suffered catastrophically during the Civil War, and was slow to recover in the late nineteenth century. But, by the time GSMNP was authorized, the Cove's population had rebounded and residents enjoyed a level of prosperity that was at least on par with the greater region of East Tennessee. Cove farmers welcomed the idea of a park until it became clear that they would lose their homes. Many resisted the taking of their land, and some were allowed to remain in the Cove as lessees, but they found their activities restricted by park regulations. The timing of the park removals with the early years of

the Great Depression was a double blow to families who lost the money they received for their land in bank failures.

Throughout the life of the community at Cades Cove, its residents were very much in the mainstream of southern culture<sup>5</sup>. From the earliest years of settlement, Cove residents traveled to Maryville and Knoxville to market their surplus crops. They were thus able to purchase manufactured goods and other necessities. The Baptist and Methodist churches were strong influences on community and family life, and though the Baptist church in particular opposed change in liturgy or worship, adherents to the faith welcomed innovation in farming and home economics. Cove farmers adapted to new technologies as they became available, and cooperative arrangements allowed farmers of greater means to share equipment with others. Farmers supplemented their incomes with wage work in mining or milling, or worked as mountain guides for tourists. Cove people attended college, fought in foreign wars, and migrated to cities. On the eve of the Park's establishment, the Cove had telephone service and many homes boasted indoor plumbing and electricity. At the time, only ten percent of the nation's rural population had electricity.<sup>6</sup>

A visitor to Cades Cove in 1926, at the time of the Congressional authorization of GSMNP, would have encountered a pastoral landscape in striking contrast to the high mountain peaks which surround the small valley on all sides. At this time, about 600 people lived on approximately 100 individual farmsteads. Houses, barns, and other structures clustered along the loop road and in the "hollows" that followed the small creeks up the mountain slopes. The flat valley floor inside the loop road would have appeared as a patchwork of fields of corn, wheat, and other crops. Cattle were grazed on the high balds rather than on the rich bottomland. Individual farmsteads

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<sup>5</sup> Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: A Southern Appalachian Community* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 88.

<sup>6</sup> The New Deal Network, "TVA: Electricity for All," <http://newdeal.feri.org/tva/tva10.htm>.

were typically composed of a house, barn, corn crib, smokehouse, and springhouse surrounded by orchards and vegetable gardens. Porches and “yards” were used intensively for household chores and therefore were home to tools and equipment. Non-residential buildings in the Cove in 1926 included churches, a post office, a school, and at least one general store. By this time Cove people lived in frame houses or log houses which had had weatherboard added. The visitor would have also encountered the various human activities associated with sustenance agriculture, including the sounds of mechanized farm machinery. The community appeared much like any other rural farming community in 1926, except for its spectacular mountain setting.

The unique geology and fertility of Cades Cove allowed residents a higher level of prosperity compared with other mountain communities. Poor soil quality elsewhere in the region fostered cycles of overuse and erosion, leading to poverty as farms were subdivided and successive generations subsisted on ever-smaller pieces of land. At Cades Cove, however, relatively small farms were able to support large families for over two hundred years. Cades Cove residents fought harder than other Smokies residents to keep their land because of its fertility.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Geography and Geology***

Cades Cove is a valley situated in Blount County in the Great Smoky Mountains of East Tennessee, surrounded by some of the highest mountain peaks in the Appalachian chain. In the Southern Appalachian region, the term “cove” denotes a small valley enclosed by mountains, and several coves exist in and near the Smokies. Geologically, Cades Cove is a “limestone window,” a type of valley where upper

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<sup>7</sup> Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 160.

layers of rock have eroded, exposing limestone beneath and creating deep, fertile soil. The erosion of the limestone continued to contribute to the mineral richness of the location. This unusual fertility of Cades Cove allowed it to support a relatively dense population and to remain prosperous into the twentieth century.



Illustration 1. The eastern United States showing Great Smoky Mountains National Park (shaded area) (Young, T. “False, cheap and degraded: when history, economy and environment collided at Cades Cove, Great Smoky Mountains National Park.” *Journal of Historical Geography* 32 (2006): 172).

The lushness of the Great Smoky Mountains is their most distinguishing characteristic. These mountains support as many as sixty-seven distinct forest communities, and the greatest concentration of biodiversity in North America.<sup>8</sup> The Smokies receive an annual rainfall second only to that of the Pacific Northwest and several families of plants and animals reach “record diversity” here.<sup>9</sup> The mountains

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<sup>8</sup> Margaret Lynn Brown, *The Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000), 4.

<sup>9</sup> National Park Service, “Nature & Science” <http://www.nps.gov/grsm/naturescience/index.htm>.

of the Smokies are some of the highest in the Eastern U.S. because glaciers never reached this region in the last ice age. The height and ruggedness of these mountains have largely determined their recent history, affecting human settlement patterns, limiting the ability of commercial loggers to reach the most remote sections, and influencing the determination by park leaders that the Smokies be designated a national park.

### ***The Cherokee in Cades Cove***

The impact of Cherokee occupation of the Smokies is largely absent from most histories of the area. The mountain landscape before the arrival of white settlers is typically regarded as having been in a state of wilderness; however some scholars have shown that the Cherokee significantly manipulated the landscape. They are credited with creating the grassy “balds” on several of the mountain tops in the region for grazing or other purposes. Additionally, the Cherokee cleared woodland by burning to improve hunting and they farmed the valley floors.<sup>10</sup> Several animal species were practically exterminated in the Smokies due to hunting by Cherokee for trade with whites. Cades Cove, named for a Chief Kade but called Tsiyahi by the Cherokee themselves, was strategically located within a network of regional Indian trails.<sup>11</sup> The Cherokee built dwellings and raised crops and livestock in the Cove,<sup>12</sup> which may have been an important “locus of Cherokee settlement” in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Margaret Lynn Brown, *The Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000), 6.

<sup>11</sup> Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: A Southern Appalachian Community* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 6.

<sup>12</sup> Elise LeQuire, “The Cove’s Changing Landscape,” *Sightline: Resource Issues In Great Smoky Mountains National Park* 3 (2002): 13.

<sup>13</sup> Brett Riggs quoted in Elise LeQuire, “The Cove’s Changing Landscape,” *Sightline: Resource Issues In Great Smoky Mountains National Park* 3 (2002): 13.



After the American Revolutionary War, waves of people inundated the Appalachian chain, altering the existing social dynamics of the mountains.<sup>14</sup> In 1770, Cherokee outnumbered non-Indians in the region, but with the migration, settlers found safety in numbers so that by 1790, the influence of the Cherokee had been minimized in most places.<sup>15</sup> Cades Cove, isolated in the Smokies, was an exception. Most of the valleys in Blount County had been settled by whites before 1818, yet Cades Cove was overlooked, likely due to a perceived Indian threat in addition to its inaccessibility. The first permanent white settler didn't arrive until 1818, at which time the Cove was still actively used by Cherokee people. Cades Cove would not be legally open to white settlement until the 1819 Treaty of Calhoun, in which the Cherokee ceded their land in the Smokies. By illegally squatting on Cherokee land in 1818, the first white inhabitants of Cades Cove foreshadowed the eventual displacement of their own descendants.

Cherokee remained in the Smokies after the 1819 treaty; years later, many were able to hide in the mountains in 1838-1839 to avoid forced removal on the Trail of Tears.<sup>16</sup> Descendants of those who escaped removal still reside in the Smokies, on the Qualla Boundary established to the south of the park on the North Carolina side.

### ***White Exploration and Settlement***

John and Lucretia Oliver of Carter County, Tennessee, were persuaded by their neighbor Joshua Jobe's advice to move to Cades Cove in the fall of 1818. John Oliver had hopes of owning his own land, and Jobe had heard from a relative, a land

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<sup>14</sup> Richard B. Drake, *A History of Appalachia* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 61.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

speculator, that there was an uninhabited, fertile valley in the Smokies.<sup>17</sup> Land speculation was common at the time, and aided in populating areas newly open to white settlement, creating a “buffer zone” between established white settlements and Indian territory.<sup>18</sup>

The Olivers nearly starved in the winter of 1818-1819, but were kept alive by Cherokee who supplied them with dried pumpkin.<sup>19</sup> Other settlers arrived in 1821, but the Cove remained a precarious frontier outpost for a few uncertain years, during which the new settlers cleared land, planted crops, and introduced cattle. Undoubtedly, the Olivers and those who followed benefited from the changes the Cherokee had made to the Cove landscape, as it would have been very difficult to clear the land in such a short time as they claimed if it had not already been at least partially cleared by the Cherokee. After the first hard years, the settlement at Cades Cove began to coalesce into a community.

### ***Community and Prosperity***

The character of the Cove community was fixed in its early years by the values and beliefs of its first settlers. In the 1820s Cove people established patterns of cooperation and community belonging that would persist for another century.<sup>20</sup> The Baptist church was another major influence on the community. Though its membership was relatively small, the church “held far more power over the community than either the civil authorities, political parties, or the prominent entrepreneurs.”<sup>21</sup> A key aspect of the culture of the Cove was the “fundamental love

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<sup>17</sup> Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: A Southern Appalachian Community* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 3.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 111.

of the land” felt by its inhabitants.<sup>22</sup> Southern Appalachian farmers aspired to a yeomanesque ideal of self-sufficiency, wherein a farmer’s land would provide all of the food and raw materials for household needs.<sup>23</sup>

The system of land use within the Cove consisted of individual family plots on the valley floor, with rights to the mountain slopes and high grassy “balds,” or high meadows, held in common. Farm products were supplemented with hunted game and wild herbs and roots gathered from the forest. Farmers grazed their livestock during the summer months on the balds; hogs roamed the mountain slopes and grew fat on chestnuts. It was customary to divide farmland equally among male children, and land was frequently leased, on generous terms, to relatives who did not have land of their own. People freely gave land for the construction of churches or other public buildings, and widows were cared for through collective contributions of land.<sup>24</sup>

The period from 1820 to 1861 was one of growth and modest prosperity for Cades Cove. A swamp at one end of the Cove was drained to open more farmland and industries began to arrive, including a sawmill and a bloomery forge. Local entrepreneurs led efforts to raise money for improved roads, which facilitated travel by people and livestock to markets in Knoxville and Maryville. Cove people sold livestock, chestnuts, tobacco, and other farm products; they were thereby able to purchase manufactured goods and the few essentials such as salt that were not produced on the farm. Five roads led out of the Cove by 1860, reducing travel time to market and to neighboring communities. Despite a measure of geographic isolation, Cove farmers kept pace with new innovations in farming and other pursuits. The Civil War, however, brought Cades Cove’s economic growth to a sudden halt.

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 19.

<sup>23</sup> Richard B. Drake, *A History of Appalachia* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 71.

### ***The Civil War and the Reconstruction Era***

The Civil War had a particularly devastating effect on Cades Cove because most families were antislavery and Unionist, reflecting a trend throughout eastern Tennessee. Indeed, Blount County and other nearby counties voted against secession in 1861. Knoxville and Maryville were not heavily damaged during the war, allowing them to rebuild faster than many other cities and towns in the South. However, Cades Cove and many of the mountain communities were slow to recover. Cades Cove's particular geography proved to be both a blessing and a curse during the war. Due to its isolation, the community was subject to raids from North Carolina Confederates, but the rugged terrain of the Smokies also allowed many of the men to hide out and avoid conscription into the Confederate army, or worse. Despite the extreme hardships endured by the Cove residents, community ties remained intact through the ordeal, as people acted in unison to defend their way of life against guerilla raids. Thus, collective action and cooperation were essential to the survival of Cove residents through the war.

The Cades Cove that emerged from the devastation of the war was very different from the prosperous community of the 1850s. In terms of land-distribution patterns, the war drastically reduced the average size of farms by more than half, while the population dropped by a third.<sup>25</sup> The traumas of the Civil War galvanized the communal aspects of life in the Cove, and a suspicion of strangers became characteristic of the mountain residents. The survival tactics adopted by Cove people during the war were not easily abandoned in the years that followed.<sup>26</sup>

Cades Cove slowly recovered from the war, eventually overtaking the peak pre-war population around the turn of the century. A telephone line crossed the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 140.

mountains into the Cove in the 1890s.<sup>27</sup> Farmers kept up-to-date on modern techniques, and more prosperous individuals shared equipment and new plant and animal breeds with their neighbors. Many Cove natives attended college or served in the armed forces, and Cove people corresponded with family and friends who had migrated from the region.

### ***New Industries: Logging and Tourism***

Given the large stands of forest and ready availability of water power in some locations, timber cutting became one of the earliest industries in the area. Large-scale commercial logging reached the Smokies by 1900. Large timber companies began buying forested land surrounding Cades Cove, the largest being the Morton Butler Company of Chicago.<sup>28</sup> Milling and lumbering provided wage work to many Cove residents. Yet, while Cove people and other mountaineers in the Smokies took advantage of this new economic opportunity, the destructive methods of the logging companies soon threatened the entire mountain ecosystem. Flood and fire became serious concerns. As a result of these practices, the Great Smoky Mountains “lost two-thirds of its original forest cover,” and untouched old-growth forest remained only on the highest, most inaccessible peaks.<sup>29</sup>

Ironically, the access provided by logging railroads facilitated tourism in the Smokies. Once rail transportation made travel into the mountains easier, resort hotels sprang up at Kinzel Springs, Sunshine, and Elkmont.<sup>30</sup> Local entrepreneurs soon realized that tourism, unlike logging, could be a permanent economic engine for the region.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 31.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 33.

By the 1920s, tourism was beginning to have a measurable economic effect on Cades Cove and surrounding areas. Many residents welcomed the added opportunity for employment to supplement farming. In 1924, John Oliver, great-grandson of the Cove's first settler, began renting tourist cabins and working as a guide for hiking parties, and by 1928 he had constructed a lodge on his property.<sup>31</sup> Other Cove families offered lodging and meals for tourists. Oliver and others, therefore, initially welcomed the idea of a park because they perceived the economic benefits it could bring to the community. One resident reportedly stated in 1921, "Cades Cove will be the chief summer resort of the south."<sup>32</sup> Oliver, who would become a central figure in the park controversy, also hoped the establishment of a park would halt the destruction of the forests by logging companies.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Park Arrival; Resident Removal***

Cove residents believed they would be able to reap the financial benefits of increased tourism in the Smokies because they were promised over and over that they would not be displaced in the course of the Park's creation. These reassurances came from park promoters and political leaders alike. John Oliver was personally befriended by park advocate Carlos Campbell, who took potential supporters to Oliver's lodge on promotional trips through the mountains.<sup>34</sup> Campbell would later criticize Oliver's resistance to the purchase of Cove farms.

In promoting the Smokies as an ideal location for a National Park in the East, park advocates downplayed the existence of the mountain residents. Both their numbers and their social and cultural development were distorted to paint the Smokies

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 246.

as a wilderness largely uninhabited save for a few “isolated” and “picturesque” mountaineers.<sup>35</sup> The popular images of the mountaineer as either a quaint anachronism or an ignorant recluse easily found their way into the promotional discourse. A booklet published by the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association (GSMCA), an organization created by Knoxville boosters, claimed: “As inhabitants of the Park, these picturesque Highlanders will be an asset and so will their ancient log cabins, their foot-logs bridging the streams and their astonishing huge water wheels,” adding, “Like the mountaineers, our Indians will retain possession of their abodes within the park, and perhaps, enjoy their new dignity, if such it is, of being object of interest to millions of tourists.”<sup>36</sup>

Local writers depicted the mountain people as lawless. Their stories no doubt contained elements of truth, but these authors “t[ook] up some outlaw and pictured him as a very bad character, and set him up as typical of all the mountain people,” while “overlook[ing] 100 years of Christian citizenship.”<sup>37</sup>

Rumors about removal spread following the 1926 passage of the bill authorizing the Park, and in April of 1927, a bill was passed by the Tennessee General Assembly which gave the Park Commission the power to seize land through eminent domain. John Oliver and others realized that the Commission intended to take their homes, and began a letter-writing campaign, appealing directly to John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and Secretary of Interior Hubert Work.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>36</sup> Excerpt reproduced in James B. Wright, *Great Smoky Mountains National Park: Statement of Jas. B. Wright of Knoxville, Tennessee, Elicited by the Park Investigating Committee appointed by the Sixty-Sixth General Assembly (1929) under House Resolution No. 21, the Senate Concurring*. McClung Historical Collection, Knoxville, Tennessee.

<sup>37</sup> John W. Oliver, “Cades Cove,” Address delivered at the Rural Letter Carriers’ meeting in Cades Cove in September, 1932, and reprinted in the Maryville Times, 15 September, 1932. Trout Historian’s Files: Cades Cove, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>38</sup> Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 160.

## ***Resistance***

Some Cove families sold their farms willingly, but others were harder to budge. Carlos Campbell writes that “the mountain people had a well-earned reputation for being shrewd traders,” and that they held out for higher prices by using their “expressed longing to remain” as a bargaining tool.<sup>39</sup> While there may be some validity to this, it most likely expresses the Park Commission’s perception of the Smokies residents as obstacles to the establishment of the Park. Other writers have shown that the majority of Cove residents cherished their land, and were resistant to changes that would alter the tight-knit fabric of the community.

Cove residents utilized several strategies and tactics to resist the taking of their land. John Oliver and others wrote letters directly to prominent figures, but also called upon influential contacts to make appeals on their behalf. They also used the legal system to fight for their land. Overt threats were a part of some Cove residents’ resistance strategies. For example, park movement leader Colonel David C. Chapman received a threatening telephone call, and a sign was posted at the entrance to the Cove reading “COL. CHAPMAN YOU AND HOAST ARE NOTIFY LET THE COVE PEOPLE ALONE. GET OUT. GET GONE. 40 M. LIMIT.” The “40 M. limit” referred to the distance in miles from Cades Cove to Knoxville. Finally, after the evictions of thousands of people, many of those who remained on lease agreements knowingly violated park rules and regulations against fishing and other activities.

Land purchases in the Cove ramped up after a 1928 bill that authorized the NPS to lease lands to former owners for two-year periods.<sup>40</sup> In 1928, there were 110

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<sup>39</sup> Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1960), 70.

<sup>40</sup> Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 158.



families in the Cove, but by the end of 1929 half of the farms had been sold.<sup>41</sup> In December of 1935, following the final decision in the John Oliver court case which challenged the Tennessee Commission's authority to take Oliver's land, all 21 families remaining in the Cove were given eviction notices with a deadline of January 1, 1936. Twelve families were eventually allowed to stay on a yearly lease. Those who remained stubbornly held onto the outward symbols of community – the post office stayed open and school sessions continued for more than a decade – however, the social networks that were the essence of the community had been broken.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Life Outside the Cove; Life Inside the Park***

Although it had no authority to do so at the time, as early as 1926, the Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains Park Commission offered Cove residents leases to remain on their land after it was sold.<sup>43</sup> This and the fact that many residents interpreted their agreements to be lifetime leases complicated the eviction process and further damaged relations between the commission and residents. As families moved out of the Cove after 1928, some houses were demolished as soon as they became vacant and cultivated fields were allowed to grow wild. For many, this proved to be the “final insult.”<sup>44</sup> Intimidation was a factor in persuading people to leave. Those who had fought the Park Commission in court were forced to vacate their homes immediately after a judgment was rendered, but those who cooperated were paid higher prices or given more generous lease terms.<sup>45</sup>

Those who remained as lessees quickly realized that “life as a leaseholder

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<sup>41</sup> Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: A Southern Appalachian Community* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 251.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 253.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 251.

<sup>44</sup> Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 166.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

Illustration 2. Map of Cades Cove in the 1920s, with individual homesteads sketched and hand-labeled by Cove resident A. Randolph Shields. Over one hundred families lived in the Cove in the 1920s; after 1935, twenty-one families remained. (Vertical file CADES COVE 1930s, GSMNP Archive).



differed dramatically from life as a landowner.”<sup>46</sup> The extensive community bonds that defined life in the Cove were disrupted, and on top of that, the few remaining residents found their day-to-day activities curtailed. Lease terms prohibited residents from cutting timber, digging herbs and roots, erecting new buildings, grazing, hunting, and possessing alcohol, and lessees were required to assist in fighting fires and to allow the Park Service access to their land.<sup>47</sup> Thus, not only were residents’ rights of use restricted on the land they had previously owned, but their rights to common resources in the form of hunting, grazing, and gathering wild plants were also restricted. One leaseholder commented, “[t]hey tell me I can’t break a twig, nor pull a flower, ...Nor can I fish with bait for trout, nor kill a boomer, nor bear on land owned by my pap, and grandpap, and his pap before him.”<sup>48</sup> Fishing regulations impacted not only park residents, but also local people from outside the Park who counted on fishing as a food source.<sup>49</sup> Many leaseholders continued in their customary activities in defiance of the Park Service’s rules. For example, Mrs. Clem Enloe of Tight Run Branch (another community in the Smokies), aged 84 in 1937, continued to fish in defiance of park regulations.<sup>50</sup> The prohibition on cutting wood also had an economic impact on park residents, as they were forced to buy coal to heat their homes.<sup>51</sup> The experience of the Walker sisters of Little Greenbrier, roughly 10 miles from Cades Cove, is a poignant yet exceptional example of life as a leaseholder. The five sisters sold their property in 1941, but obtained a lease agreement and continued in the self-sufficient lifestyle of their forebears until the last sister died in 1964. After an article

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Margaret Lynn Brown, *Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 117.

<sup>50</sup> National Park Service, Division of Publications, *At Home in the Smokies: A History Handbook for Great Smoky Mountains National Park* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, 1984), 83.

<sup>51</sup> Margaret Lynn Brown, *Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 117.

appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1946, their home became a tourist attraction and people flocked to see these “living relics” and to purchase handmade goods from them. The hundreds of visitors received by the Walkers eventually became a burden, and the aging sisters asked the Park Service to remove the sign directing tourists to their home.

Those who moved out of the Cove faced an uncertain future. Some found wage work in the surrounding region; others traveled much farther from the Smokies to settle. Some were able to buy new land, but many lost the money earned from selling their farms, which they deposited into banks that failed after the 1929 stock market crash. Ironically, as the “collapse of the market system appeared to breathe new life into the yeoman system of self-sufficient agriculture”<sup>52</sup> and unemployed men returned to the family farms of their youth, the people of Cades Cove found themselves cut off from the land that could have ensured a measure of stability during the Great Depression. Cove people were unable to buy comparable land and found themselves separated from former friends and neighbors, losing the traditional community support systems that characterized Cove culture.<sup>53</sup> This new reality was particularly hard on the elderly and the tenant families who had no land of their own, and therefore received no compensation for their forced removal.

The arrival of the Park had a disastrous effect on both the community of Cades Cove and the rural landscape. Although most of the people who left the Cove were compensated financially for their land and improvements, there was no compensation for the dissolution of community and kinship bonds. Cove people lost a well-developed web of mutual support and a distinct community culture. The Cove people

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<sup>52</sup> Richard B. Drake, *A History of Appalachia* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 165.

<sup>53</sup> Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: A Southern Appalachian Community* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 252.

felt betrayed, especially after being promised in the years before the Park that they would not be forced from their homes. Bitter feelings toward the Park and the federal government have persisted, even after the passing of the last Cove residents in the late-twentieth century. In 1984, Kermit Caughron, a Cove leaseholder, commented that, “the land remained...but in the death of the community [I had] lost a way of life and much of [my] freedom.”<sup>54</sup> Caughron, who died in 1999, was reportedly the last living former resident of the Cove.<sup>55</sup> At a ceremony for the yearlong “Tennessee Homecoming” celebration in 1986, the special guest and last surviving Cades Cove landowner, 98-year-old Russell Whitehead, upon introduction pointed his finger at Governor Lamar Alexander and exclaimed, “You stole my land!”<sup>56</sup>

### ***Conclusion***

Although promotional park literature often suggested otherwise, the residents of Cades Cove were typical rural Americans during the Cove’s relatively brief period as a farming community. Residents continually sought to improve their livelihoods through road construction and marketing of surplus goods, cooperation in utilizing up-to-date farming practices, and taking advantage of new economic opportunities provided by lumbering and tourism. An entrepreneurial spirit prevailed despite the disastrous effects of the Civil War, which in some ways encouraged insularity and distrust of outsiders. During the early movement for a national park in the Smokies, Cove residents were poised to take full advantage of their geographic location and experience as guides and hosts to tourists, believing, as they were repeatedly promised, that their homes would not be taken. Although they were compensated for

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<sup>54</sup> T. Young, “False, cheap and degraded: when history, economy and environment collided at Cades Cove, Great Smoky Mountains National Park,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 32 (2006): 174.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>56</sup> Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 170.

the sale of their land, Cove people lost the social bonds and patterns of cooperation that were the essence of a community which could not be reproduced after their displacement.

The betrayal felt by the Cove people has been woven into the cultural memory of the Smokies region, where so many other people suffered removals or broken promises. But, the former residents and their descendants continue to revisit the Cove in memory and in person, to hold reunions and to care for the burial places of their kin. The history of Cades Cove eventually captured the imaginations of park personnel, who recognized the value of preserving the rural landscape.

Park service policy in Cades Cove has always reflected contemporary ideas and attitudes as they change over time. Unfortunately, the establishment of GSMNP occurred when there was no overarching historic preservation policy in the NPS; in fact, it took several years of “hands-off” management (essentially allowing nature to reclaim the farms and pastures) before Cades Cove was even recognized as a historic resource. Ideals generated by the western parks, chronic under-funding, and emerging ideas about historic preservation all collided at Great Smoky Mountains National Park in the years following the eviction of the mountain people.

## CHAPTER 3

### NATIONAL PARK SERVICE HISTORY

#### *Introduction*

One way of understanding the difficulty of establishing Great Smoky Mountains National Park is to view it within the context of the changes occurring in the National Park Service (NPS). This chapter will examine the movement to create national parks in the U.S. and the emergence of the NPS as the federal agency that would be charged not only with the protection of the parks, but also with the establishment and execution of historic preservation policy at the national level.

National parks were established in the West as early as the 1870s, before widespread settlement occurred and, in some cases, even before states were formed. The federal approach to the creation of the first parks was to withdraw land from speculation and settlement. Given the growing need for protecting the archaeological resources of the Southwest, the National Park Service was authorized by Congress as a distinct agency in 1916.<sup>57</sup> Because of the large areas being overseen, management policies were only generally outlined by Washington, and many decisions that would have lasting impacts on parks were made at the individual park level. Concomitantly, some service-wide policies were carried out in the new eastern parks when perhaps they should have been reexamined. The most notable example of this is the prohibition on permanent residents within the parks. This policy was informally adopted in the early park years before being made explicit in the 1918 Statement of

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<sup>57</sup> John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), 191.



Policy.<sup>58</sup> Few precedents existed before GSMNP for dealing with permanent residents in the parks.

If the establishment of national parks on federal lands in the West represented a new kind of land-use approach by the federal government, then the acquisition of private land for the crafting of eastern parks was an unprecedented move. The eastern parks were very different from their western forebears because they had been logged, mined, and farmed. Yet, Great Smoky Mountains, Shenandoah, and Mammoth Cave National Parks were created in the image of the western parks. The existence of thousands of residents within the boundaries of both GSMNP and Shenandoah National Park was downplayed to present these places as pristine wildernesses. These notions coupled with the prohibition on private inholdings led to the obliteration of dozens of communities within the two parks, the people relocated and their buildings cleared from the landscape. Western antiquities were protected at places like Casa Grande, but recognition of Cades Cove and other communities as having historic value (and not just aesthetic value) would not take place until the 1930s. The Historic Sites Act of 1935 went a long way in legitimizing preservation as a management goal alongside wilderness protection in places like GSMNP.

The New Deal is discussed in this chapter because of its immense importance in the history of the NPS. New Deal programs and funding allowed for the greatest expansion of the park system and development of infrastructure in national park history. These programs had an especially great effect on the new eastern parks, which were just beginning to be developed.

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<sup>58</sup> Franklin K. Lane, Secretary of the Interior, to Stephen T. Mather, 13 May 1918, reprinted in Larry M. Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents* (Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1994), [http://www.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/anps\\_1.html](http://www.nps.gov/history/online_books/anps_1.html), Chapter 1: The Early Years.

### ***Foundations of the National Park Movement***

The national park movement in the United States during the second half of the nineteenth century arose from a growing appreciation of wild lands coupled with a perceived need to protect them as a public resource, ideas which resulted from a uniquely American experience. The Victorian fascination with nature coincided with the official closing of the frontier. Pride in the country's remaining scenic lands replaced the open frontier in the American identity. With the influence of such writers as Henry David Thoreau, Americans began to regard "nature" not as a hostile wasteland to be tamed, but as a virtuous landscape reflecting moral ideals. The experience at Niagara Falls, where landowners went so far as to charge visitors to view the falls through holes in fences, also prompted lawmakers to feel a duty to protect scenic lands from destruction at the hands of commercial enterprise.<sup>59</sup> The vast "untouched" lands remaining in the United States before the turn of the century stood in stark contrast to the European landscape, which had been drastically altered and largely deforested. The heritage of European nations was located in settlements hundreds or thousands of years old; scenic lands in the U.S. were seen as a kind of American heritage. As industry ravaged lands in the eastern states, champions of nature looked to the extensive federal lands in the West, especially those with outstanding or unique scenic features, as potential sites for public parks. Local boosters and railroad companies recognized the opportunity to turn a profit by providing park concessions and transportation, and so supported the park movement.

The effort to establish national parks was also influenced by the American Park Movement. Taking their cues from the English garden tradition and picturesque landscape design, professionals in the nascent field of landscape architecture sought to

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<sup>59</sup> Larry M. Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents* (Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1994), [http://www.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/anps\\_1.html](http://www.nps.gov/history/online_books/anps_1.html), Chapter 1: The Early Years.

establish public pleasure grounds in and near large cities to mitigate the health effects of crowding and pollution as well as to promote appropriate social behavior. Central Park in New York City, one of the most influential achievements of the American Park Movement, opened in 1859. This school of landscape design sought to improve upon nature by enclosing and modifying it.<sup>60</sup> Although the national parks would be conceptualized as untouched wild lands, in fact, the hands of administrators, designers, and planners would transform them into designed landscapes. In time, they would be both enclosed and improved.

Additionally, around the turn of the century, Americans began to enjoy more leisure time, and resort vacations, once the exclusive province of the elite, became accessible to the growing middle class. The rise of the automobile fueled the tourism boom, and indeed “made the national park system as we know it possible.”<sup>61</sup> The automobile and the two-day weekend would also stimulate demand for parks close to population centers.

### ***The Early Parks***

The first national parks were woefully under-funded. The oldest unit of the National Park System, Hot Springs National Reservation in Arkansas, created in 1832, marked the first time the federal government permanently set aside land for the enjoyment of the public. A resort town was already established at the springs, and private business would continue to provide visitor facilities. Yellowstone, the first true national park, was authorized by Congress in 1872. However, support for additional parks would be slow. The public was more concerned with taming the vast acreage in the West by subdividing it and selling it, and was not interested in saving

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<sup>60</sup> Ethan Carr, *Wilderness By Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln, NB: The University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 25.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

it.<sup>62</sup> The “Yellowstone Act” defined the Park’s boundaries, established it as a public park for the benefit and enjoyment of the people, and included language identifying natural features as worthy of preservation. In reality, however, no real protections existed in the Park during its early years. Poaching and looting of natural curiosities were rampant, and even after the Secretary of the Interior published park regulations in 1877, the rules remained virtually unenforceable due to a lack of staff and funds. Congress assumed the first parks would be financially self-supporting; as a result, the first superintendent of Yellowstone had no salary, there were no rangers, and the first congressional appropriations would not be granted until five years after the Park’s authorization.<sup>63</sup> Only after Yellowstone was placed under Army control in 1886 did illegal hunting, looting, and grazing subside.<sup>64</sup>

A change began to be obvious as Progressivism took hold in 1890, after which an unsurpassed era of Congressional legislation carved out reservations in the federal lands of the West.<sup>65</sup> Sequoia, Yosemite, and General Grant National Parks in California were all authorized in 1890. These parks, too, were characterized by poor planning and lack of appropriations; money would not be provided for another eight years.<sup>66</sup> After all, the federal government was embarking on an unprecedented experiment in land policy. As at Yellowstone, private concessionaires were expected to provide visitor facilities and transportation. Development was essentially unplanned, and these enterprises, usually subsidiaries of railroad companies, often built large resort-style visitor facilities adjacent to the scenic wonders that the parks were supposed to protect.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), 17.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>65</sup> Ethan Carr, *Wilderness By Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln, NB: The University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 55.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

Concern over the consequences of unchecked commercial logging—particularly erosion, flooding, and silting—prompted the passage of the Forest Reserve Act of 1891, which authorized the president to set aside forested lands in the public domain as forest reserves.<sup>68</sup> Though the national parks were chosen for their outstanding scenic qualities, the negative impacts of logging and mining would also be used to justify their establishment. Like the new national parks, the early forest reserves lacked the means to enforce protective legislation, and they were often damaged by illegal grazing and other activities.<sup>69</sup> Public concern over the looting of archaeological sites prompted the passage of the Antiquities Act in 1906, giving the president the power to designate National Monuments on federal lands to protect “objects of historic or scientific interest,” and providing criminal penalties for looting.<sup>70</sup> The Weeks Act of 1911, following in the success of the Forest Reserve Act, allowed for the *purchase* of land for forest reserves, allowing large swaths of eastern forests to finally gain protection and setting an important precedent for the establishment of national parks in the East.

### ***A National Park Service***

Before August 25, 1916, fifteen national parks had been authorized by Congress and were managed on an individual basis by the Department of the Interior. After August 25, with the passage of the National Park Service Organic Act<sup>71</sup>, the parks would be managed as a system under the leadership of a director. The National Park Service was thus created in the Department of the Interior, with the mandate: “to

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<sup>68</sup> John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), 48. The forest reserves became national forests in 1907 under the administration of the USDA Forest Service. They differ from national parks in that some extractive activities are permitted.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.

<sup>70</sup> Act of June 8, 1906 (Antiquities Act), 16 U.S.C. 431 et seq.

<sup>71</sup> The Act of August 25, 1916 (16 U.S.C. 1 et seq.) is popularly known as the National Park Service Organic Act.

conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”<sup>72</sup> This somewhat contradictory mission—to conserve and to provide for public enjoyment—is often referred to as the park service’s “dual mission” or “dual mandate.”<sup>73</sup> The Act authorized the Secretary of the Interior to make rules regarding the use and management of the parks, and provided for criminal penalties for violation of those rules. The Secretary also reserved the authority to grant grazing leases.

The principal concern of the early Park Service was the physical development of the parks. It soon became apparent that the concessionaires’ operations alone would not be sufficient to accommodate the growing numbers of tourists, most of who were arriving by automobile. Often, the resort-hotel model of the concessionaires did not lend itself to the needs of the middle classes. At a 1917 National Park conference, the main issue was “how to develop the parks to attract and accommodate people of all economic circumstances.”<sup>74</sup> Road-building would thus become the mainstay of physical development for several decades, as it was considered the best way to make the parks accessible to the public.

Although the Service had assumed responsibility for the existing parks, monuments, and reservations in 1916, there was yet no comprehensive policy to guide the system as a whole. Instead, the parks were operated as independent units, often without direction in the bureaucratic atmosphere that characterized the Department of

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<sup>72</sup> Act of August 25, 1916 (National Park Service Organic Act), 16 U.S.C. 1 et seq.

<sup>73</sup> Ethan Carr, *Wilderness By Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln, NB: The University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 5. The “dual mandate” portion of the legislation was drafted by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr.

<sup>74</sup> Linda Flint McClelland, *Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service, 1916 to 1942* (National Register of Historic Places, Interagency Resources Division, National Park Service, 1993), 77.

the Interior.<sup>75</sup> Secretary of the Interior Franklin Lane's 1918 Statement of Policy, actually a letter drafted by Assistant Director Horace Albright, would finally provide a policy framework to unite the parks as a system.<sup>76</sup> Indeed, it was the appointment of Stephen Mather as Director that finally made a difference because he began to shape the collection of parks into a system of varied public reservations with a consistent set of policies.<sup>77</sup>

The letter, largely a reflection of the ideas of Mather and others<sup>78</sup>, would guide all future Park Service policy. The policy rested upon three basic ideas: the national parks must remain unimpaired for present use and the enjoyment of future generations; the parks are "set apart for the use, observation, health and pleasure of the people;" and that the national interest dictates all decisions affecting public and private activities in the parks.<sup>79</sup> The letter provided some key policy positions that would affect the development of later parks, including Great Smoky Mountains National Park:

1. The leasing of summer home sites within the parks was specifically prohibited
2. The cutting of trees and grazing were restricted and subject to the Secretary's approval
3. "Roads, trails, buildings, and other improvements" were to "harmonize" with the landscape
4. Improvements were to be "carried out in accordance with a preconceived plan"
5. The parks were to be "kept accessible [to the public] by any means practicable"
6. Hunting was prohibited

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<sup>75</sup> Larry M. Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents* (Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1994), [http://www.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/anps\\_1.html](http://www.nps.gov/history/online_books/anps_1.html), Chapter 1: The Early Years.

<sup>76</sup> Albright was Acting Director at the time, while Director Mather was recovering from illness.

<sup>77</sup> Ethan Carr, *Wilderness By Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln, NB: The University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 87.

<sup>78</sup> Larry M. Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents* (Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1994), [http://www.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/anps\\_1.html](http://www.nps.gov/history/online_books/anps_1.html), Chapter 1: The Early Years.

<sup>79</sup> Franklin K. Lane, Secretary of the Interior, to Stephen T. Mather, 13 May 1918, reprinted in Larry M. Dilsaver, ed., *America's National Park System: The Critical Documents* (Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1994), [http://www.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/anps\\_1.html](http://www.nps.gov/history/online_books/anps_1.html), Chapter 1: The Early Years.

7. “Educational, as well as recreational” use of the parks was to be encouraged
8. All private holdings were to be “eliminated as far as it [was] practicable”
9. The size of a potential park would be “of no importance” so long as it could be administered effectively
10. New parks were to be chosen based on “scenery of supreme and distinctive quality or some natural feature so extraordinary or unique as to be of national interest and importance.”<sup>80</sup>

While the NPS administered several sites where protection of cultural resources was paramount, it is apparent that natural scenery was the Service’s foremost concern. Park policy was directed towards preserving natural conditions (through grazing and cutting restrictions) or recreating natural conditions (through eliminating private holdings).<sup>81</sup> One activity in particular, “cleanup,” was a crucial part of physical development projects. Cleanup entailed destroying the physical evidence of human occupation as well as removing unsightly natural debris, including dead or dying trees, from scenic areas.<sup>82</sup> Through landscaping techniques, cleanup was also a way to make the sites of recent construction look as though the land had not been disturbed. These policies and procedures illustrate the Service’s principal concern for the preservation of scenic resources, and not of “nature” per se. The idea of “restoring” natural conditions points to the artificiality, on some level, of the parks. Set aside as landscapes to be enjoyed by the public, they were in reality a reflection of the values of their time.

The policy of planned park development, introduced with the 1918 statement, would evolve over the next decade into a policy of mandatory comprehensive planning. Congressional appropriations were still slow to materialize, however, and it

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Linda Flint McClelland, *Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service, 1916 to 1942* (National Register of Historic Places, Interagency Resources Division, National Park Service, 1993), 82.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.



would not be until the Great Depression that federal work programs would allow park administrators to implement their development plans.

### ***National Parks in the East***

The movement to establish National Parks in the East began in the last decades of the nineteenth century, often in the form of suggestions by eastern visitors to the western parks. For example, Mr. and Mrs. Willis P. Davis, the couple credited with spearheading the early movement to establish a national park in the Smokies, were inspired by a visit to western parks.<sup>83</sup> In 1894, Representative Henderson of North Carolina asked Congress to consider a national park in his state. In 1899, the Appalachian National Park Association, a citizens' group, formed in Asheville with the goal of persuading the government to create a park in the southern Appalachians. The association presented a memorial to Congress in 1900 with approval from the North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, and Virginia state legislatures in 1901, but the federal government officially opposed the purchase of lands for national park purposes.<sup>84</sup> An unidentified park supporter wrote in 1901 that a park in the Smokies would "protect the forests, and the water supply which depends on them" as well as provide "an attractive Summer resort for the people within a radius of twenty-four hours' travel."<sup>85</sup> NPS Director Mather called for an eastern park at least as early as 1919, and again in a 1923 report.<sup>86</sup>

The Weeks Act of 1911 provided some guidance for the NPS in legitimizing the large-scale purchase of land by the government, allowing a national park to be

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<sup>83</sup> Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1960), 13. Willis P. Davis was a Knoxville businessman.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>85</sup> Editorial, "The Appalachian National Park," *The New York Times*, Jan. 6, 1901, page 20. <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html>

<sup>86</sup> John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), 252.

carved out of the heavily-populated East. The Act allowed the Secretary of Agriculture to examine and recommend for purchase “such lands within the watersheds of navigable streams” necessary to control flooding, for such lands to be administered as National Forests.<sup>87</sup> The act passed constitutional muster by purporting to regulate river flow, and thus, commerce.<sup>88</sup> The regulation of commerce was accepted as a valid “public use” under the Fifth Amendment, however, NPS Director Stephen Mather doubted whether the federal government could exercise the taking power to create national parks.<sup>89</sup>

By the mid-nineteen-twenties the eastern park movement had taken firm hold. Some of the motives were the same as those which gave rise to the western parks: concern over the negative impacts of lumbering, mining and local boosterism. Some southern Congressmen undoubtedly wanted the federal government to purchase the cutover lands and reforest them.<sup>90</sup> Around the turn of the century, politicians and citizens tended to equate national parks with forest reserves and use the terms interchangeably in campaigning for protected lands in the East. This reflects a simple lack of awareness of the essential difference between the two: that national parks would be *preserved*, that is, no logging would be permitted, whereas forest reserves would be *conserved*, meaning that some extractive activities would be allowed. The conflation of the terms also indicates that people wanted both protection and recreation on public lands.

Before the authorization of GSMNP by Congress, only one true national park existed to the east of the Mississippi River: Lafayette National Park in Maine

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<sup>87</sup> Act of March 1, 1911 (Weeks Act), 36 Stat. 961.

<sup>88</sup> Margaret Lynn Brown, *Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 92.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Karl B. Raitz and Richard Ulack with Thomas R. Leinbach, *Appalachia: A Regional Geography* (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1984), 247.

(renamed Acadia National Park in 1929).<sup>91</sup> The major obstacle to establishing additional parks was the simple fact that eastern lands were owned by private interests. It was relatively easy for the federal government to set aside parks out of the vast federal lands of the West, but no such lands existed in the East. By 1923, at the urging of the first Park Service directors, Congress began to realize that the parks would never be financially self-supporting, and that park development and administration demanded federal funding.<sup>92</sup> However, Congress would be unable to appropriate the millions of dollars that would be needed to purchase land for even one additional eastern park. NPS Director Stephen Mather stated in the Park Service's seventh annual report of 1923: "As areas in public ownership in the East are at present limited to a number of forest reserves acquired under the provisions of the Weeks Act ..., it appears that the only practicable way national park areas can be acquired would be by donation of lands from funds privately donated, as in the case of the Lafayette National Park."<sup>93</sup> The states where the parks were to be located would be charged with the task of raising the funds.

### ***Historic Preservation in the National Park System***

While by the mid-twenties the Park Service had jurisdiction over historic sites as diverse as Casa Grande, Ford's Theatre, and various battlefields, there existed no clear direction for the management of cultural resources aside from the cursory

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<sup>91</sup> "National Park System Timeline," National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/history/history/hisnps/NPSHistory/timeline.htm>.

Fort McHenry in Baltimore, Maryland was authorized as a national park in 1924 but was re-designated as a national monument in 1939.

<sup>92</sup> Ethan Carr, *Wilderness By Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln, NB: The University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 149.

<sup>93</sup> United States Department of the Interior, *Final Report of the Southern Appalachian National Park Commission to the Secretary of the Interior, June 30, 1931* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 1. The Weeks Act was signed into law in 1911. A commission was created to recommend areas for purchase; this selection process would serve as a model for the selection of sites for national parks in the east by the Southern Appalachian National Park Commission.

mention of “historic objects” in the Organic Act. Horace Albright writes: “Prior to 1930, the Service’s activities in historic preservation were limited to the protection of a few sites of prehistoric significance and historic places identified with the early history of the West and Alaska.”<sup>94</sup> Albright, who became NPS Director in 1929, and his predecessor, Stephen Mather, took a particular interest in historic sites. Congress continued to authorize at least one site of historic interest per year to be designated as National Battlefield Sites, National Military Parks, and National Monuments, however these designations continued to reflect specific historic themes: ancient civilizations, the colonial era, famous presidents, and military history.

President Franklin Roosevelt’s June 10, 1933, executive order, which reorganized federal bureaus, consolidated the national monuments of the Forest Service, the battlefields and the cemeteries of the War Department, and the parks and monuments of the District of Columbia under NPS administration. This executive order made the Park Service “the Federal agency charged with the administration of historic and archeological sites and structures throughout the United States,”<sup>95</sup> which today “has more responsibility for the identification, restoration, protection, and administration of historic sites and structures than any other government agency, national or state,” while “no private body approaches its authority or the number and size of its reserved and protected areas.”<sup>96</sup> The order also guaranteed, in effect, that the Service would continue to exist as a distinct agency, and would not be merged with or subsumed by another bureau.<sup>97</sup>

The federal government had recognized the value of historic resources in the Antiquities Act of 1906, which provided for the protection of resources located on

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<sup>94</sup> Horace Albright, *Origins of National Park Service Administration of Historic Sites*, (Philadelphia: Eastern National Park and Monument Association, 1971), 1.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

federal land, but offered no practical guidance for their management. The Historic Sites Act of August 21, 1935, specifically charged the Park Service with the protection of “historic sites, buildings and objects of national significance for the inspiration and benefit of the people of the United States.”<sup>98</sup> It gave the Secretary of the Interior, through the park service, specific duties, including: to make a survey of historic and archaeological sites, buildings, and objects to identify those which “possess exceptional value”; to conduct research relating to historic sites, buildings, and objects; to acquire “by gift, purchase or otherwise” property “satisfactory to the Secretary”; to “Restore, reconstruct, rehabilitate, preserve, and maintain historic or prehistoric sites, buildings, objects, and properties of national historical or archaeological significance”; and to operate and manage the property acquired under the provisions of the act.<sup>99</sup> The Act also established the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments, composed of members appointed by the Secretary, to “advise on any matters relating to national parks” and to “recommend policies to the Secretary” pertaining to national parks and the management of historic sites.<sup>100</sup> Thus was a framework created that would enable the Park Service to craft its approach to historic preservation.

### ***Interpreting the Parks***

Even in the years before the establishment of the NPS, efforts were made to educate visitors about the natural or historic resources they visited in the national parks. Early efforts were informal, and carried out by guides, concessionaires, or even soldiers in the case of Yellowstone. Most of the educational material produced by the

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<sup>98</sup> 16 U.S.C. 461 et seq

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. The Advisory Board was renamed the National Parks Advisory Board in 1976 (Pub. L. 94–458)

Park Service in its early years was promotional in nature, consisting of pamphlets, maps, and film reels aimed at attracting visitors to the parks.<sup>101</sup> A step towards an educational program came in the 1918 statement of policy, which stated: “The educational, as well as the recreational, use of the national parks should be encouraged in every practicable way.”<sup>102</sup> Congress was unwilling to appropriate funds, however, and the Service, in typical fashion, turned to the private sector to accomplish its mandate. The history of federal park interpretation plans seems to be characterized by lofty goals stymied by a lack of funding. A 1920 report from NPS Director Stephen T. Mather called for a museum to be established in every park; however the money was not forthcoming.<sup>103</sup> The Service’s first field historians were hired at Colonial National Monument in 1931, and the first Chief Historian, Verne Chatelain, was employed a few months later.<sup>104</sup> After the 1933 reorganization, which resulted in the addition of new units to the park system, history became a legitimate use of staff and funds. The 1935 Historic Sites Act bolstered the educational activities of the NPS, which were previously unsupported by legal mandate, by explicitly directing the Secretary of the Interior to establish museums and develop educational programs.<sup>105</sup> By the onset of World War II, the national park system had seventy-six museums, about a third of which had permanent exhibits, in addition to thirty-seven assorted historic structures.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Barry Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: History Division, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1986), 4-5.

<sup>102</sup> Franklin K. Lane, Secretary of the Interior, to Stephen T. Mather, 13 May 1918, reprinted in Larry M. Dilsaver, ed., *America’s National Park System: The Critical Documents* (Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1994), [http://www.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/anps\\_1.html](http://www.nps.gov/history/online_books/anps_1.html), Chapter 1: The Early Years.

<sup>103</sup> Barry Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: History Division, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1986), 9.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-21.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-46.

### ***Comprehensive Planning and the New Deal***

As the National Park Service coalesced as an agency, leaders struggled to manage the parks as a system rather than as a collection of distinct units, and to put into practice the principles of planned design and harmonization set forth in the 1918 statement of policy. Five-year plans were ordered for all the parks in 1926, however, by the early 1930s, planning remained “haphazard and varied from park to park.”<sup>107</sup> As a result, Horace Albright issued “Office Order No. 228: Park Planning” in April, 1931. It drew on the Employment Stabilization Act, passed two months earlier by Congress, requiring government agencies to create six-year plans which would provide employment if the Great Depression continued. Albright’s order provided detailed instruction for each park superintendent to create a six-year development plan by the end of the year.<sup>108</sup> The NPS and other agencies would have plans at the ready when New Deal emergency spending programs began to come into existence over the next few years. It was also fortunate for the NPS to have a planning policy already in place when it acquired over fifty new parks and monuments as a result of the 1933 reorganization.<sup>109</sup>

The planning policies of the 1920s and 1930s effectively institutionalized the role of landscape architecture within the park system.<sup>110</sup> While the Great Depression ravaged the American economy, for our national and state parks it was a golden age – an era of unsurpassed recreational development which has not been equaled since. Suddenly, the parks which had operated on shoestring budgets even in the best of times had at their disposal the money and labor to realize their master plans. In fact,

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<sup>107</sup> Larry M. Dilsaver, ed., *America’s National Park System: The Critical Documents* (Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1994), [http://www.nps.gov/history/online\\_books/anps\\_1.html](http://www.nps.gov/history/online_books/anps_1.html), Chapter 2: Defining the System.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ethan Carr, *Wilderness By Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln, NB: The University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 257.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 193.

the New Deal, probably more than any other force, shaped the national and state parks as we know them. Emergency Conservation Work, renamed the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1937, was mobilized within months of Roosevelt's inauguration and the launch of his New Deal programs. The CCC employed young men, supervised by unemployed professionals, in work ranging from reforestation of cutover land to the construction of recreational facilities. The Park Service and the United States Forest Service provided most of the CCC's projects, and "Within a year, virtually every landscape architect available for work...had been hired, directly or indirectly, through New Deal spending."<sup>111</sup> The initiation of the New Deal in 1933 marked the change from private concessionaires providing the bulk of park infrastructure to federal planning and financing of park improvements. The CCC's capabilities were well-suited to the labor-intensive techniques demanded by rustic park architecture, which called for hand-crafting and local materials to achieve "harmonization" with the natural landscape. CCC money also funded the hiring of historians to research and produce educational materials and conduct lectures and tours for park visitors. The park service also built museums in at least eight parks and monuments during the 1930s using Works Progress Administration, Public Works Administration, and Emergency Conservation Work funds.<sup>112</sup>

As the park system exploded in size in the 1930s, new kinds of parks were created to meet the widest possible range of recreational needs. These parks, many of which included state parks, included more visitor amenities and recreational opportunities than the earlier scenic parks, including swimming and boating, sports fields, and picnicking and camping areas. The expansion of both national and state park systems during this period was considered necessary to save the "primeval" parks

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid. 251.

<sup>112</sup> Barry Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: History Division, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1986), 24.



from overcrowding and incompatible activities.<sup>113</sup> Thus, for the “primeval” parks (including GSMNP), the preservation of wilderness in a “natural” state became further entrenched as the top management priority.

### ***Private Inholdings: Policies and Precedents***

The Park Service’s “hands-off” approach to allowing natural processes to operate in the primeval parks extended to the treatment of homesteads and cutover lands. In dealing with sites of human activity and occupation, the Service simply allowed nature to reclaim the land. Very early in the history of national parks, an explicit policy was established that private holdings would be eliminated whenever possible. It seems that in many cases, the inholdings that park administrators were so concerned about belonged to timber interests. It simply would not be fitting for logging companies to retain any rights within a scenic park. After all, protection from logging, or prevention of its negative effects, was one of the principal reasons for establishing national parks. However, even in the earliest parks created out of federal land, there existed homesteading claims. Many of these were not legitimate, but there were homesteaders with legitimate claims who were forced out of Yellowstone. The Secretary of the Interior’s published rules for the park in 1877 specifically prohibited permanent residents, and gave those living there thirty days to vacate after receiving notification.<sup>114</sup> At Yosemite, the state of California evicted a small number of settlers.<sup>115</sup> Since the lands were unsurveyed and not yet open to homesteading, these claims were legally invalid. However, two of the claimants fought their evictions in

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<sup>113</sup> Ethan Carr, *Wilderness By Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (Lincoln, NB: The University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 275.

<sup>114</sup> John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), 19.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 52. Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Big Tree Grove were gifted to the State of California by the federal government in 1864. In 1890 the land surrounding the state park was set aside as a national park; in 1906 the state park was given back to the federal government to create a single national park.

court and were at least compensated for their losses.<sup>116</sup> Later, after the establishment of Yosemite National Park, a less-scenic outlying portion of the park was “lopped off” because it contained a concentration of private holdings.<sup>117</sup>

Why was the Secretary of the Interior concerned over a handful of homesteaders? Because there were relatively few of them, and since many of the claims were invalid anyway, it was probably considered easier to simply eliminate the private holdings rather than deal with the issue of allowing permanent residents within the parks. Though it seems the logical thing to have done at the time, the prohibition on private holdings, cemented into place with the 1918 statement of policy, would result in bitter conflict later on when larger and more established communities of residents existed within the proposed boundaries of new parks.

In addition to white settlers, American Indians actively used federal lands at the time of the establishment of several national parks. At Yellowstone, for example, raids on hunters and campers were a problem until an 1880 treaty, after which “there was no more trouble.”<sup>118</sup> Although park lands in the West were used early on by tribes in the region, with time they withdrew and their role was neatly forgotten.<sup>119</sup> At the time of the establishment of GSMNP, Cherokee who had successfully escaped forced removal in 1838 during the Trail of Tears still resided in the area, on the Qualla Boundary established in the late-nineteenth century. The reservation was left out of the Park.

The theory that early prohibitions on private holdings were mainly targeted at lumber companies is supported by the fact that at Sequoia and General Grant National Parks, private claims which threatened the cherished giant sequoias were “[o]ne of the

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>119</sup> Margaret Lynn Brown, *Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 10.

most serious problems” facing these parks.<sup>120</sup> The homestead claims there were for the most part fraudulent, and proved easy to eliminate. Similarly, at Glacier National Park, “[p]rivately owned lands in the park presented a more serious problem than the summer home permits” which had been leased before such concessions were prohibited by the 1918 statement of policy.<sup>121</sup> The private lands of concern were owned by lumber companies. Only eight “homesteaders” filed claims, most likely in an effort to gain title to prime timber lands.<sup>122</sup>

As stated earlier, the policy of eliminating private holdings, as applied to individual landowners rather than lumber companies, would prove extremely troublesome when parks were proposed which contained sizeable farming communities, specifically in Great Smoky Mountains and Shenandoah National Parks. While it was generally accepted that the government would set aside federal lands or even acquire commercially-owned lands for the use and enjoyment of the public, the prospect of uprooting entire communities and allowing farmland to be reclaimed by nature would be more difficult for the public to swallow. However, the NPS would ultimately abide by the no-inholdings position established in the 1918 statement of policy.

Secretary of the Interior Ray Lyman Wilbur, in a May 16, 1929 letter to the North Carolina Park Commission, made explicit the official policy regarding private inholdings within the boundary of the proposed GSMNP. He cited the statement that the Department of the Interior had issued regarding the Act of February 16, 1928 which authorized the Secretary of the Interior to lease lands within Great Smoky Mountains and Shenandoah National Parks:

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<sup>120</sup> John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), 111.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

“No private holdings as such are to remain within the park’s boundaries. This involves the acquisition of holdings of mountaineers and others who have been on their small parcels for many years, and who in some cases will find it difficult, without time, to establish themselves elsewhere. ... While it is to be understood that as many as possible of these holdings will be abandoned when the purchase price has been passed, there should be some latitude in special cases where ... hardships would be imposed [i]f the occupants were forced to move promptly at the passing of title.”

Wilbur went on to state that, “such lowland areas as Cades Cove of the Tennessee side and those of the Oconalufy on the North Carolina side will be needed particularly for public camp sites and no commitments for continued leases can be made respecting such areas.”<sup>123</sup> Acting Director of the NPS Arno Cammerer reiterated this policy in a letter to a concerned resident of Cosby, Tennessee: “it is not possible to build a park and leave a whole lot of private holdings inside, - either it is to be a park in the fullest sense of the term or should be left in its present condition.”<sup>124</sup> Cammerer also reiterated the position that leases would be granted only in special cases. Thus was the rigid, system-wide no-inholdings policy tempered with the lease-back provision. It appears that the broad language defining the “special cases” which merited lease agreements left the Park Service with a certain amount of leeway in deciding which residents would receive leases; uncooperative sellers received poor lease terms, if they were granted leases at all. The leasing system was also used to appease summer-home owners, who were able to obtain lifetime leases. While mountain farmers typically obtained short-term leases, these privileged few were able to transfer title to their children, who enjoyed the rare prospect of maintaining summer homes in the Smokies through the late twentieth century.

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<sup>123</sup> Ray Lyman Wilbur to Verne Rhoades, 16 May 1929, in boxes 3-4, Record Group 262: Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains Park Commission, Tennessee State Archives.

<sup>124</sup> Arno B. Cammerer to W. L. Valentine, May 1929, in boxes 3-4, Record Group 262: Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains Park Commission, Tennessee State Archives. The letter is undated, but is preceded in the TGSMPNPC correspondence by Valentine’s letter to Cammerer of 7 May 1929. These archives were kept in chronological order; the next item of correspondence following the letter in question is dated 25 May 1929.

## ***Conclusion***

Understanding the history of the national park movement and the National Park Service is crucial in order to contextualize the unique problems that arose with the creation GSMNP. Just as carving a public park out of privately-held lands was a new idea in the early twentieth century, the idea of setting aside vast tracts of federal land for the use and enjoyment of the public was a new idea in the mid-nineteenth century when the first National Reserve was created at Hot Springs, Arkansas. There existed over one dozen national parks in the western U.S., and only one in the East, before the authorization of Great Smoky Mountains, Shenandoah, and Mammoth Cave National Parks. The eastern parks were conceived and molded in the image of the western parks. Furthermore, when they were authorized in 1926, the National Park Service had existed as an agency for only a decade. Because of these circumstances, the Service was slow in developing responses suited to the unique challenges in the eastern parks – namely, the significant human settlements within their boundaries and the destruction wrought by logging and other extractive activities.

The prohibition on private inholdings was exercised at Yosemite and Yellowstone National Parks in order to protect them from logging. As a side effect, it expediently removed the small number of settlers who had made homesteading claims. After it was standardized in the 1918 Statement of Policy, the prohibition on inholdings played a much greater role in the story of the eastern parks. The difficulty in completing the land acquisitions and the negative publicity that ensued may have deterred the NPS from pursuing additional parks in the East.

The years that immediately followed the establishment of GSMNP were the most productive years of the national and state park systems to date. Largely due to New Deal programs, the NPS was able to undertake massive development projects,

making the parks as we know them today. In the midst of this period of intense planning and construction came the Service's mandate to preserve historic resources, the Historic Sites Act of 1935. Subsequently, at GSMNP, the NPS was charged with the somewhat contradictory task of preserving historic resources within a wilderness setting.

The National Park Service grew rapidly from its inception through the 1930s, fine-tuning its mission and objectives in the process to encompass wilderness protection, recreation, education, and historic preservation. The complex history of the NPS as an agency and the gradual development of a preservation ethic had significant impacts on GSMNP, which experienced its growth spurt during the tumultuous early years of the Service. The Smokies can be viewed as a testing ground for many of the new ideas and policies generated during this fertile period of Park Service history. Cades Cove in particular makes an excellent case study for examining historic preservation challenges at NPS-administered sites, especially the contradictions inherent in preserving history within a primeval park. Several factors converged at Cades Cove in the early twentieth century to affect its physical fabric: western ideas of National Parks as wildernesses, the prohibition on inholdings, chronic under-funding, the golden age of the New Deal and the CCC, and a newly-formed mandate to preserve historic resources.

## CHAPTER 4

### CREATING GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

#### *Introduction*

The establishment of a national park in the southern Appalachians required the combined effort and cooperation of local boosters, local and state politicians in both Tennessee and North Carolina, the Department of the Interior and Congress. Eventually, it also required the assistance of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. The effort of so many individuals shows that this park was not merely set aside by Congress as the western parks had been, rather, it was *created*. First, it had to be imagined. This was accomplished by local politicians and businesspeople who envisioned tourism as an economic generator that would provide more and longer-lasting benefits than the logging operations which were rapidly denuding the mountain slopes. It was also imagined by Park Service personnel who recognized a need for national parks in the East; they envisioned reclaimed land given over to wilderness to become a counterpart of the western parks. Local people inside the eventual park boundary also envisioned a reserve that would halt the destruction of the logging companies and where they would capitalize on the tourism industry. In 1924 Congress authorized Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work to establish a commission that would investigate potential sites for national parks in the East. The Southern Appalachian National Park Commission eventually recommended both the Smokies and Shenandoah. Politics dictated that Mammoth Cave in Kentucky would be included in a bill that authorized three new national parks in the East.

The establishment of GSMNP also required creativity. Constitutional restrictions on the federal government's takings power meant that the states of

Tennessee and North Carolina were charged with the task of acquiring the needed land. Each state created its own commission to carry out the purchases, using the power of eminent domain where necessary. A boundary for GSMNP had to be selected that would include enough acreage (as dictated by the authorizing legislation) but that would also satisfy enough local people by excluding populated areas. A preliminary boundary line included many more populated communities than were included in the final boundary. Cades Cove, often a focal point of controversy over the boundary line, was included because the National Park Service intended to develop tourist facilities in the valley.

After the boundary was set, and as soon as purchases began, buildings and structures associated with farming, logging, mining, commercial, and residential activities were razed, burned, or sold to clear the land for reclamation by nature. Both demolition and preservation were aided by the Civilian Conservation Corps at Cades Cove. CCC enrollees provided the labor needed to “clean up” abandoned farmsteads, but CCC men also documented thousands of structures in the Park and relocated and reassembled historic structures. By the Second World War, a park had been created in the Great Smoky Mountains.

### ***Imagining an Eastern Park***

In the 1920s the idea of national parks was still relatively new. It was generally believed that national parks would be financially self-supporting. Because of this belief, states were reluctant to give land for national parks, and the “idea that the federal government should keep the public domain, or any part of it, for the benefit of *all the people* was not yet widely entertained.”<sup>125</sup> Homestead and timber claims in

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<sup>125</sup> John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), 50.



Yosemite had proved troublesome in previous decades, so the National Park Service preferred that the states ceding the land to the federal government take the initiative to eliminate private inholdings.

There had been activity to promote the idea of a park in the southern Appalachians as early as 1899, with the formation of the Appalachian National Park Association. Willis P. Davis, a businessman from Knoxville, made preserving the Smokies a personal mission after visiting western parks in 1923. Davis proposed that the Knoxville Chamber of Commerce adopt the park movement, but instead succeeded in forming the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association with members of the Knoxville Automobile Club.<sup>126</sup> The association's members were area businessmen who saw an economic opportunity for Knoxville in creation of a national park in the Smokies.

Ten million dollars was estimated as the cost of acquiring land in the Smokies. At the time, all of the lands that would become the park were in private hands, with over 85% held by 18 logging companies and the remainder comprised of approximately 1,200 farms and 5,000 home lots.<sup>127</sup> Much of the forest had been cutover, and there was concern in Knoxville for preserving the mountains for recreation. Additionally, the mountains were a physical barrier, and a "leading topic of discussion at most gatherings of businessmen was ways and means of getting a road to connect eastern Tennessee and western North Carolina."<sup>128</sup> Some of the southern Congressmen were in favor of establishing a park, and some simply wanted the federal government to assume the cost of reforesting cutover land.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1960), 17.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>129</sup> John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), 250.

### ***The Southern Appalachian National Park Commission***

In 1924, at Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather's urging, Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work appointed the Southern Appalachian National Park Commission (SANPC) to explore possible locations for a park in the east. The commission was not federally funded, and instead relied upon John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Mather, and commission members to support its research.<sup>130</sup> Potential park areas would need to meet requirements set by the SANPC: a site would be at least 500 square miles in area; the area should have "forests, shrubs, flowers, streams, and cascades, all in a natural state"; springs and streams would be available to support camping and fishing; there should be "opportunities for wildlife protection, and should be a natural museum preserving the outstanding features of the Southern Appalachians as they appeared in early pioneer days"; and the area should be easily reached by both rail and highway.<sup>131</sup> The commission traveled for several weeks, visiting potential sites and meeting with local park supporters. The Great Smoky Mountains stood out as exceptionally scenic, but the Blue Ridge Mountains in Virginia (to be called Shenandoah) were also favored because of their proximity to population centers and transportation corridors. At a December, 1924 meeting, Chairman Temple reported that of the several sites considered, "the Great Smoky Mountains easily stand first because of the height of the mountains, depth of the valleys, ruggedness of the area, and the unexampled variety of trees, shrubs, and plants."<sup>132</sup> In this report, which was submitted to Secretary Work, Temple went on to suggest that Shenandoah be established first because it was so

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 253. The commission was headed by Representative H.W. Temple of Pennsylvania; the other members were W.A. Welch (general manager of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission), Col. Glenn S. Smith of the United States Geological Survey, Harlan P. Kelsey (former president of the Appalachian Mountain Club), and William C. Gregg of the National Arts Club. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. was involved in the creation and funding of National Parks across the U.S, including GSMNP.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>132</sup> United States Department of the Interior, *Final Report of the Southern Appalachian National Park Commission to the Secretary of the Interior, June 30, 1931* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 7.

easily accessible, and because the development of park infrastructure in the Smokies was expected to be expensive and difficult due to the ruggedness of the area.<sup>133</sup>

A 1925 bill authorized the Secretary of the Interior to determine boundaries for parks in the southern Appalachians and in the Mammoth Cave region of Kentucky, and to “receive definite offers of donations of lands and moneys.”<sup>134</sup> Secretary Work was authorized to appoint a five-member commission to carry out the act’s provisions; he simply reappointed the members of his informal committee, keeping the SANPC name.<sup>135</sup> The Commission then reexamined the three areas recommended in 1924: the Smokies, Shenandoah, and Mammoth Cave.

It was obvious that the states of Tennessee and North Carolina would play a major role in acquiring the lands needed if a national park in the Smokies were authorized. Two booster organizations, Tennessee’s Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association and North Carolina’s Great Smoky Mountains, Inc., began fundraising in earnest, pitching the proposed park as “an investment, not a gift” to local businesses and individuals.<sup>136</sup>

At the suggestion of the SANPC, a bill, signed by President Coolidge on May 22, 1926, specifically authorized the establishment of Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Shenandoah National Park, and Mammoth Cave National Park.<sup>137</sup> Regarding GSMNP, the act specified that a minimum of 400,000 acres out of a potential maximum of 704,000 were to be turned over to the federal government before the Park Service would assume administrative responsibility, and that

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>134</sup> John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), 255.

<sup>135</sup> United States Department of the Interior, *Final Report of the Southern Appalachian National Park Commission to the Secretary of the Interior, June 30, 1931* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 9.

<sup>136</sup> Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1960), 37.

<sup>137</sup> 44 stat. 6169

development would not begin until a major portion of the remaining property was acquired.

### ***Setting the Park Boundary***

Arno B. Cammerer, then Associate Director of the NPS, was charged with determining the National Park's boundaries. Early proposals included several established communities within the proposed limits; Cammerer's first boundary line circled an area containing over 15,000 inhabitants.<sup>138</sup> However, maps published by GSMCA, the Knoxville booster organization, left out Cades Cove and other communities.<sup>139</sup> Some state officials wanted to exclude the farming communities from the Park by keeping the boundaries at higher elevations, but the final area of 704,000 acres was set in 1925.<sup>140</sup> Communities including Pigeon Forge and Tuckaleechee Cove were left out, but Cades Cove, Cataloochee, Greenbrier, and others were included. The boundary left out commercial orchards and major hotels, the result of lobbying by landowners who were of greater means than the mountain farmers. Why were the farming communities included, when the purpose of a national park was recognized to be the conservation of nature and scenery? Most likely it was due to the fact that park promoters wanted to recreate a wilderness that no longer existed. While it's true that some of the forest in the Smokies was never cut, wild areas on the scale of the western parks simply did not exist in the east after the turn of the century. Since the nascent Park Service had not yet devised a way to manage private holdings within parks, elimination of such holdings became its policy. In addition, as Daniel S. Pierce writes, the Park Service intended to transform the Cove

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<sup>138</sup> Margaret Lynn Brown, *Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 93.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>140</sup> Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1960), 36.

into “the largest developed area on the Tennessee side.”<sup>141</sup> Cammerer spoke plainly about the inclusion of Cades Cove: “You can’t put tourists on mountain tops. You must give them conveniences.”<sup>142</sup>

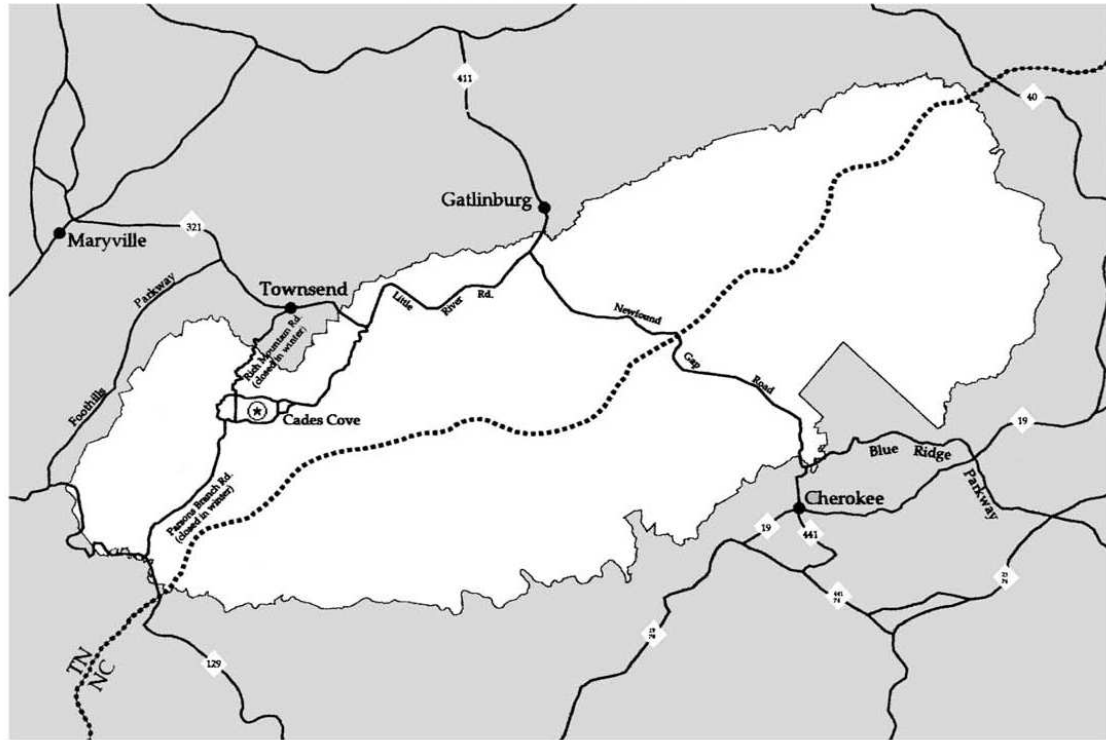


Illustration 3. Cades Cove within Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The Park is shown as the un-shaded area. (Young, T. “False, cheap and degraded: when history, economy and environment collided at Cades Cove, Great Smoky Mountains National Park.” *Journal of Historical Geography* 32 (2006): 172).

Rumors of removal spread quickly among the residents of the Smokies after the 1926 bill was passed. Tennessee Governor Austin Peay felt compelled to reassure the mountaineers: “As long as I am a member of the [Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains] Park Commission, I wish to assure these people that there will be no

<sup>141</sup> Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 161.

<sup>142</sup> *Knoxville News-Sentinel*, 2 April 1929, quoted in Margaret Lynn Brown, *Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 95.

condemnation of their homes,” noting that such an act on the part of the government “would be a blot upon the State that the barbarism of the Huns could not match.”<sup>143</sup> As early as 1925, the effort to establish a national park in the Smokies was met with resistance by landowners within the proposed boundary. A July 18, 1925, meeting was held by the SANPC specifically to address the opposition of the landowners. The commission issued a statement declaring that “Owing to the opposition of certain business interests in North Carolina ... the commission may find it necessary to modify its boundary as originally contemplated and consider the advisability of the creation of a national park which will lie largely in the state of Tennessee.”<sup>144</sup> The North Carolina “business interests” cited were almost certainly lumber companies who owned large tracts in that state. The Commission also passed a resolution at the 1925 meeting: “That when the commission makes its final report and recommendations on the proposed national park areas that it designate the outside boundary of these areas ... with the purpose of securing at once as much as possible of the designated territory to be established as a national park; the remainder of the designated areas to be acquired as rapidly as possible.”<sup>145</sup>

On June 29 and 30, 1926, a two-day meeting of the SANPC was held with NPS Assistant Director Arno Cammerer present to determine the recommendations that would be made to the state representatives from North Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia about the lands to be purchased.<sup>146</sup> The Final Report of the Southern Appalachian National Park Commission states that at this meeting, it was decided that “...it might be possible ... to permit desirable settlers to occupy their present holdings

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<sup>143</sup> Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 158.

<sup>144</sup> United States Department of the Interior, *Final Report of the Southern Appalachian National Park Commission to the Secretary of the Interior, June 30, 1931* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 13.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

for a short term of years, subject to removal at the end of such periods or earlier if they became undesirable for any reason” but it was ultimately decided that “the question regarding settlers within the park areas might well be left for future decision.”<sup>147</sup>

Cammerer was instructed by Secretary Work to select a tentative boundary for GSMNP including the minimum 427,000 acres required, and in 1927 he submitted a report which roughly split the park’s area between Tennessee and North Carolina.<sup>148</sup>

Since the first campaigning by park boosters in the 1920s, both farmers and summer home owners asked that their communities be left outside the park boundary. Then, why was the boundary set to include so many populated areas? The simple answer is that there was no reasonable way to draw the boundary to exclude all of these places. A national park was not being set aside from undeveloped federal holdings as was the case in the West, rather it was being *created* out of a patchwork of cutover lands, small farming communities, largely undeveloped summer home lots, and virgin forest. Furthermore, the setting of the boundary was a top-down administrative process, and, although the states carried out the purchases, the authority to determine what lands were required for park purposes ultimately resided with the Secretary of the Interior.

### ***Land Acquisitions: The State Park Commissions***

The major piece of legislation authorizing Great Smoky Mountains National Park, a bill signed by President Coolidge on May 22, 1926, provided for the establishment of park administration as soon as 150,000 acres were turned over by the two states, and determined that the Park would be considered established once a major

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 28.

portion of the 704,000 acres had been deeded.<sup>149</sup> Following the Congressional authorization of the establishment of GSMNP, a 1927 bill in North Carolina established an 11-member Park Commission to handle land acquisitions; Tennessee established its own seven-member commission with the power to condemn lands for park purposes.<sup>150</sup> By 1927, \$2 million each had been appropriated by the states of Tennessee and North Carolina and an additional \$1 million had been pledged by individual donors, but \$10 million had been estimated as the total cost of acquiring land.<sup>151</sup> John D. Rockefeller Jr. offered to match the \$5 million, but the pledged donations proved difficult to collect, especially after the stock market crash of 1929. In the end, a little over \$500,000 was collected.<sup>152</sup> It later became apparent that the \$10 million estimated would fall short of the actual cost of acquiring the necessary land, and in 1933 President Franklin Roosevelt announced a \$1.55 million appropriation to cover the difference.<sup>153</sup>

The purchase of lumber company tracts proved difficult, and these large holdings were tackled first by the state commissions. Few, if any, of the lumber companies sold willingly, as they attempted to cut as much timber as possible before the Park became off-limits. The purchase of the smaller tracts, including the Cades Cove farms, “began in earnest in the spring of 1928,” after a bill signed by President Coolidge in February of that year authorized 2-year leases to Park occupants.<sup>154</sup> Park Service personnel believed that the leases were only a temporary measure intended to allow the residents to relocate as they eliminated all private property inside the

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<sup>149</sup> Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1960), 44.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-54.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-67.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>154</sup> Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 158.



boundaries.<sup>155</sup> The Service pointed to difficulties in dealing with inholdings in the western parks as justification for this policy.

Many individual landowners refused to sell or asked higher prices for their land than the state commissions were willing to pay. Of the cases that resulted in condemnation proceedings, the case of John W. Oliver, great-grandson of Cades Cove's first permanent white settler, stood out as a litmus test for the fate of the remaining landowners. In his book *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains*, park booster and GSMCA secretary Carlos C. Campbell describes the case as a needless obstacle in the path of a righteous undertaking: "one of the most troublesome and lengthy cases that had to be handled by the Tennessee Commission", "Problems and side-issues of the Oliver case were out of all proportion to the small size of the tract."<sup>156</sup> In fact, TGSMPC chair Col. David C. Chapman wrote in 1931, "This case has become extremely important and upon its outcome will depend whether or not we will have money enough to complete the park without great delay ... In fact buying is practically at a standstill."<sup>157</sup> Although Chapman was likely exaggerating to some extent, his letter illustrates how important the case was, or at least how important it was perceived to be. John Oliver was a well-respected leader in Cades Cove as a Baptist minister, postmaster, and farmer. He operated tourist lodging on his property before the establishment of the Park, and was an early supporter of the park idea because he saw the opportunity for Cove residents to expand their economy. However, he became one of the most outspoken park opponents after it became obvious that Cove residents would be removed. After Oliver refused to sell,

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1960), 97-98.

<sup>157</sup> Col. David C. Champan to Hon. M. H. Gamble, 12 Aug. 1931, in Secretary of the Interior Washington, D.C., boxes 3-4, Record Group 262: Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains Park Commission, Tennessee State Archives.

condemnation proceedings were filed against him in July of 1929.<sup>158</sup> Oliver won the first court battle on the grounds that the federal government had not declared Cades Cove to be “essential” to the park.

On December 14, 1929, Colonel Chapman wrote to Associate Director Cammerer regarding the TGSMNPC’s use of condemnation in acquiring land:

The Tennessee Park Act provides that “condemnation shall not apply to improved property on which houses are located, or to orchards located on said property, unless and until the Secretary of the Interior shall notify in writing the Park Commission that such improved lands or orchards are essential to be acquired by the Park Commission for National Park purposes.”<sup>159</sup>

After Secretary Work formally declared the inclusion of the Cove necessary to the Park, a second suit was brought against Oliver, who fought in court until he finally lost in 1932.<sup>160</sup> The Oliver decision, issued by the Tennessee Supreme Court, “effectively closed the door on further Constitutional challenges filed by homeowners in the Smokies and ended the possibility of preventing the state from condemning their homes.”<sup>161</sup> In keeping with the unofficial policy of making examples out of difficult sellers, the NPS was reluctant to lease Oliver’s land back to him. Superintendent Eakin wrote to Horace Albright, “I hope he will not be given a lease ... The Cades Cove situation can be charged to him and he would always be a source of trouble for us,”<sup>162</sup> However, Oliver was ultimately granted a series of one-year leases until he finally moved from the Cove on Christmas Day, 1937.

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<sup>158</sup> Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1960), 98.

<sup>159</sup> Colonel David C. Chapman to Arno B. Cammerer, 14 Dec. 1929, in boxes 3-4, Record Group 262: Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains Park Commission, Tennessee State Archives.

<sup>160</sup> Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 161.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> J.R. Eakin to Horace Albright, 17 Oct. 1931, in Condemnation: Tennessee Papers, box 3, file 3, GSMNP Archives. Quoted in Pierce, Daniel S. *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 162.

The states came close to raising the original estimate of \$10 million required to purchase park lands through donations and state congressional appropriations. With a gift of \$5 million from John D. Rockefeller Jr. and \$1.5 million from the federal government, the property for GSMNP was purchased. In 1929, Director Albright reported that half of the minimum area of 427,000 acres for Great Smoky Mountains National Park had been purchased or optioned.<sup>163</sup> On February 20, 1930, the first deeds were handed over to the federal government, totaling more than 150,000 acres.<sup>164</sup> Later that year, Major J. Ross Eakin was named the first Superintendent of the Park; the NPS took over administration of the new Park in 1931.<sup>165</sup> With land purchases fully underway and the NPS assuming control of the Park, at the Commission's request, the Secretary of the Interior dissolved the SANPC in the summer of 1931.<sup>166</sup> With park administration came enforcement of park regulations, which included prohibitions on hunting and fishing, and those residents who remained inside the Park were subject to these rules. By 1933, three large tracts and 40 smaller holdings remained to be purchased.<sup>167</sup> At that time, 75 Cades Cove farms (or roughly three quarters of the Cove total) comprising over 8,000 acres had been purchased.<sup>168</sup> Congress authorized full establishment of the Park on June 15, 1934. Most of the land was purchased and transferred to the federal government by 1936, and Great Smoky

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<sup>163</sup> John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), 259.

<sup>164</sup> Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1960), 96.

<sup>165</sup> Eakin had previously served as superintendent of Glacier National Park (1921-24 and 1927-31) and as superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park (1924-27) National Park Service, "Historic Listing of National Park Service Officials: Superintendents of National Park System Areas," [www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/tolson/histlist7g.html](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/tolson/histlist7g.html).

<sup>166</sup> United States Department of the Interior, *Final Report of the Southern Appalachian National Park Commission to the Secretary of the Interior, June 30, 1931* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 37. The files and records of the SANPC were transferred to the National Park Service.

<sup>167</sup> John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), 259.

<sup>168</sup> Durwood Dunn, *Cades Cove: A Southern Appalachian Community* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988), 251.

Mountains National Park was formally dedicated by President Franklin Roosevelt on September 2, 1940.

### ***Disposal and Demolitions***

Well before the NPS assumed administrative control of the park, the TGSMPC was directed by the federal agency to clear the land of vacated structures in order to allow nature to reclaim the sites of farming, mining, and logging activities. Colonel David C. Chapman, chair of the commission, wrote in a letter sent to park residents in 1931, “We have been requested by the National Parks (sic) Service to dispose of all the houses that we do not intend to keep permanently.”<sup>169</sup> In a letter to one of his employees, Chapman wrote, “Uncle Sam wants the houses sold and torn down.”<sup>170</sup> Correspondence in the records of the TGSMPC as well as Superintendent Eakin’s monthly reports from 1931-1933 indicate that “disposal” was carried out in a variety of ways, and seemingly without any guiding regulation<sup>171</sup>. Houses and other buildings were sold, given away, burned, or demolished for fuel. It appears that agents of the TGSMPC, and later, GSMNP employees, utilized these methods according to convenience and profitability. Buildings either in too poor condition or too remotely located to be sold were demolished, burned, or left to decay. TGSMPC agent William H. Myers, reporting on his work in Cades Cove for the month of April, 1931, wrote, “I’m on a deal for the William Gregory house and the Abbott Hill house and will have to cut the prices a little but think that will be better than going to the expense of

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<sup>169</sup> Col. David C. Chapman to Robert Price, 8 Jan. 1931, in Correspondence – P, boxes 3-4, Record Group 262: Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains Park Commission, Tennessee State Archives.

<sup>170</sup> Col. David C. Chapman to W. H. Myers, 30 Jan. 1931, in Correspondence – M, boxes 3-4, Record Group 262: Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains Park Commission, Tennessee State Archives.

<sup>171</sup> The haphazard appearance of TGSMNP activities conveyed in their archived records is corroborated by Margaret Lynn Brown, who writes that the North Carolina commission paid standard per-acre amounts for land, and kept diligent records, whereas the Tennessee commission “did not keep diligent records and employed more ‘tactics’ in acquiring land.” She notes that North Carolina had fewer small parcels to buy – 263 as opposed to 879 in Tennessee. Margaret Lynn Brown, *Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 97-98.

tearing them down.”<sup>172</sup> Advertisements of houses for sale were run in the *Maryville Times* newspaper; Myers wrote on April 13, 1931, “If this add (sic) doesn’t sell these houses I think the next step would be for us to give them away to be torn down and cleaned up and taken away and then destroy the rest.”<sup>173</sup> A lack of any official policy governing the disposition of buildings is indicated in an April 6, 1931 letter from Myers to the TGSMPK office manager, where Myers noted that another agent’s giving away a house had complicated his own attempts to sell houses.<sup>174</sup>

Shortly after assuming his post as park Superintendent, J. Ross Eakin wrote to Col. David C. Chapman asking if there were any legal restrictions on burning buildings in the Park. Chapman replied, “I am advised that it is necessary to, at least, take the roof off of a building before you burn it. If a building was wrecked in some manner it would then be all right to burn it.” He continued, “For instance, if you should put a few sticks of dynamite under the corner of a house it would then be in such shape it could not be repaired and it would be no violation to destroy it by burning.”<sup>175</sup> Destruction by burning was a favored tool of underfunded TGSMPK agents and Park employees. Superintendent Eakin noted that “In the case of outlying buildings [burning] may sometimes be the best method of getting rid of them.”<sup>176</sup> On June 5, 1931, Eakin noted that during the month of May, “100 buildings on 57 tracts of land were destroyed ..., proving “the arson squad” was on the job. Some were given away for cleanup but most were burned during rainy periods”; the following

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<sup>172</sup> W.H. Myers to Marguerite Preston, 1 May 1931, in Correspondence – M, boxes 3-4, Record Group 262: Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains Park Commission, Tennessee State Archives.

<sup>173</sup> W. H. Myers to Col. David C. Chapman, 13 April 1931, in Correspondence – M, boxes 3-4, Record Group 262: Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains Park Commission, Tennessee State Archives.

<sup>174</sup> W. H. Myers to Marguerite Preston, 6 April 1931, in Correspondence – M, boxes 3-4, Record Group 262: Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains Park Commission, Tennessee State Archives.

<sup>175</sup> Col. David C. Chapman to J. Ross Eakin, 10 March 1931, in Secretary of the Interior Washington, D.C., boxes 3-4, Record Group 262: Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains Park Commission, Tennessee State Archives.

<sup>176</sup> J. Ross Eakin, “Superintendents’ Monthly Reports” 1931-1935, GSMNP Archives, 6 February 1932.

month he reported that “16 old houses and 11 barns on the Tennessee side of the park were burned”.<sup>177</sup>

A number of sources have noted former residents’ horror at seeing their homes and farm buildings, schools and churches, commercial blocks and service buildings destroyed so soon upon being vacated.<sup>178</sup> Superintendent Eakin noted, “It appears that the burning of buildings, especially in the more densely populated regions, arouses considerable ire among the residents.”<sup>179</sup> However, it appears that vandalism, squatting, and moonshining were genuine concerns, and the understaffed Park administration dealt with them by removing vacant structures as quickly as possible. Superintendent Eakin noted in a 1931 letter, “We have found that deserted houses are used for moonshining and other immoral purposes.”<sup>180</sup> Eakin’s monthly reports from the Park’s early years note these illegal activities: “The ... house is occupied by a squatter, a woman ... and a grown daughter. These women bear a very bad reputation for peddling whiskey and loose morals” (8 April 1931), “Since we sent out notices last fall approximately 38 of those squatters with their families have left the park” (9 March 1932).<sup>181</sup> Squatters were likely former tenant farmers within the Park forced off the land without compensation, and the severity of the Great Depression probably exacerbated this problem. In his reports of August 6, 1931, and July 7, 1933, Eakin noted the capture of stills within the Park.

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<sup>177</sup> J. Ross Eakin, “Superintendents’ Monthly Reports” 1931-1935, GSMNP Archives, 5 June 1931 and 6 July 1931.

<sup>178</sup> Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 167.

<sup>179</sup> J. Ross Eakin, “Superintendents’ Monthly Reports” 1931-1935, GSMNP Archives, 6 February 1932.

<sup>180</sup> J. Ross Eakin to Luther Flynn, 14 Sept. 1931, in Secretary of the Interior Washington, D.C., boxes 3-4, Record Group 262: Tennessee Great Smoky Mountains Park Commission, Tennessee State Archives.

<sup>181</sup> J. Ross Eakin, “Superintendents’ Monthly Reports” 1931-1935, GSMNP Archives.

### ***The Impact of the Great Depression and Federal Work Programs***

The onset of the Great Depression coincided almost exactly with the removal of Park residents. It has already been noted that the timing of the Depression was particularly unfortunate for those who sold their farms only to lose the money in bank failures. For the most part, the exodus of thousands of mountain residents from the Smokies occurred between the 1929 stock market crash and the start of New Deal programs, including the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), in 1933. The purchase of smaller tracts, including farms, was underway by 1928, and by 1933 most of the Park residents had relocated. Meanwhile, structures were removed from the landscape and fields were allowed to grow wild. Therefore, it appears that a significant portion of building removals occurred during this time.<sup>182</sup> Superintendent Eakin noted that the “severity of the depression” was to blame for difficulties in selling vacant structures and for the poor prices they brought. The early years of NPS administration of GSMNP, before authorization and appropriations were available for full development, occurred during the years of the Depression before federal money and labor became available through the New Deal. Eakin’s administration in these years was understaffed and under-funded. Acting Superintendent Charles S. Dunn noted in his monthly report of June 10, 1933, after five Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) camps had been established, “Mr. Eakin is handicapped with an administrative organization too small to even cover properly the regular park matters.”<sup>183</sup> Thus, the physical traces of communities in the Smokies were obliterated during a time when

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<sup>182</sup> It is unclear how many structures were disposed of by TGSMNPC agents and their counterparts on the North Carolina side, but it has been shown that they were directed by the federal government to get rid of buildings within the park. Superintendents’ Monthly Reports from 1931 to 1933 reveal that at least 562 buildings were removed under NPS administration between January 1931 and April 1933. Beginning in May 1933 and continuing through at least 1935, the monthly reports focus almost exclusively on the arrival of ECW camps and their projects. No more mention of building removals is made through at least 1935, but examination of ECW and CCC records might indicate that enrollees did engage in building demolition.

<sup>183</sup> Charles S. Dunn, “Superintendents’ Monthly Reports” 1931-1935, GSMNP Archives.

neither the funding nor the staff existed to do much else. In the same report, Dunn also mentions that ECW enrollees were engaged in three types of work: motorways, trails, and forest cleanup, in order of priority. It is not surprising that road and trail construction would be chief concerns, as several histories of Park Service design and development show that the Organic Act was interpreted as mandating that the parks be made accessible to the public. “Forest cleanup,” a feature of park planning throughout the system, almost certainly included the destruction of vacant structures in GSMNP, and the removal of buildings from the park was likely accelerated with the arrival of the work camps.

Sixteen camps existed in GSMNP at the peak of CCC activity, employing over 4,000 men. They constructed hiking and horseback riding trails, fire roads and lookout towers.<sup>184</sup> Landscape architects, following “[o]n the heels” of the CCC, designed comfort stations, shelters, campgrounds, picnic areas, and other visitor amenities, but they did not address the preservation of the pastoral landscapes that dotted the Park.<sup>185</sup> Federal work programs allowed state and national parks across the United States to accomplish development on an unprecedented scale between 1933 and the Second World War. So, why didn’t the existence of dozens of CCC camps and several landscape architects in the Smokies allow for an outcome other than the expedient disposal of buildings? It appears that it wasn’t until Emergency Conservation Work was well underway (tackling the mandated priorities, principally road and trail building) that park administrators and NPS officials began to seriously consider preserving the cultural landscapes of Cades Cove and other places in the park. CCC enrollees, supervised by landscape architects, moved and reassembled

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<sup>184</sup> Carlos C. Campbell, *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1960), 125.

<sup>185</sup> Margaret Lynn Brown, *Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 127.



some of the oldest structures in the park to create imagined pioneer homesteads. Cable Mill, for example, which anchors the reconstructed homestead at the west end of Cades Cove and is often the only attraction in the Cove which visitors step out of their cars to see, was reconstructed by CCC workers in 1937.<sup>186</sup> However, the peak of CCC activity in GSMNP occurred in 1934 and 1935,<sup>187</sup> before the programs for mountain culture developed in the late 1930s and '40s. In developing Cades Cove as an historical area, the Park Service may have missed a window of opportunity created by federal work programs. The mountain culture programs were eventually implemented, but in limited form and with watered-down results.

While better funding might have saved more of the built landscape in Cades Cove, the timing of the Depression likely prevented the Cove from becoming a golf course or artificial lake (both were proposed developments). The Depression slowed tourism, with a lack of funding “mercifully” defeating these proposals.<sup>188</sup>

## ***Conclusion***

Secretary of the Interior Ray Lyman Wilbur stated in a 1930 speech at the presentation of the first 150,000 acres for GSMNP: “In the acquisition of this land for the park for national-park purposes there were no precedents to guide the several States and their representatives.”<sup>189</sup> Nor did the western parks provide any precedents for the management of the heavily-used land in the new eastern parks. The physical landscape of the Great Smokies was altered, and its history obscured, by policies

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>187</sup> Campbell, Carlos C., *Birth of a National Park in the Great Smoky Mountains* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1960), 125.

<sup>188</sup> Margaret Lynn Brown, *Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 120.

<sup>189</sup> United States Department of the Interior, *Final Report of the Southern Appalachian National Park Commission to the Secretary of the Interior, June 30, 1931* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1931), 35.

which dictated that park lands be restored to a state of wilderness. The policies at GSMNP were dictated in some instances by time and economy. Before the CCC, there was neither the funding nor the labor to accomplish anything above and beyond the speedy disposal of buildings by sale, demolition, or burning. New Deal programs accelerated development of GSMNP, while providing the resources to document the architecture of the Smokies but also to destroy it. The haphazard manner in which park land was acquired and cleared of inhabitants and buildings paved the way for haphazard management of Cades Cove in the early years of the Park.

## CHAPTER 5

### NATIONAL PARK SERVICE MANAGEMENT OF CADES COVE

#### *Introduction*

After suffering neglect and building demolitions during the 1930s, Cades Cove was recognized by National Park Service officials to be of historical value, and deserving of protection. However, the agency's management of Cades Cove has varied considerably. The "hands off" policy that was settled upon before the Cove even came under NPS management changed its physical appearance drastically. Within a decade, secondary growth began to overtake the fields, and former homesteads could be distinguished from the surrounding forest only by the seasonal blooming of fruit trees that had been planted by the mountain farmers.<sup>190</sup> Most of the structures, paths, equipment, plant varieties, and domestic animals associated with sustenance agriculture quickly disappeared. Many of these elements, which speak to the daily lives of the Cove's inhabitants more powerfully than the empty buildings that remain, have never been recovered or recreated.

From the 1930s through the close of the twentieth century, the patchwork appearance of the valley floor was gradually lost, first to neglect and later to monocropping. It was decided early on that Cades Cove would be interpreted as a "typical" nineteenth-century pioneer farming community and this required the removal of twentieth-century structures that did not fit into the period of significance. In the early years of the Cove's interpretation, some former residents were granted grazing leases

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<sup>190</sup> Margaret Lynn Brown, *Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 135.

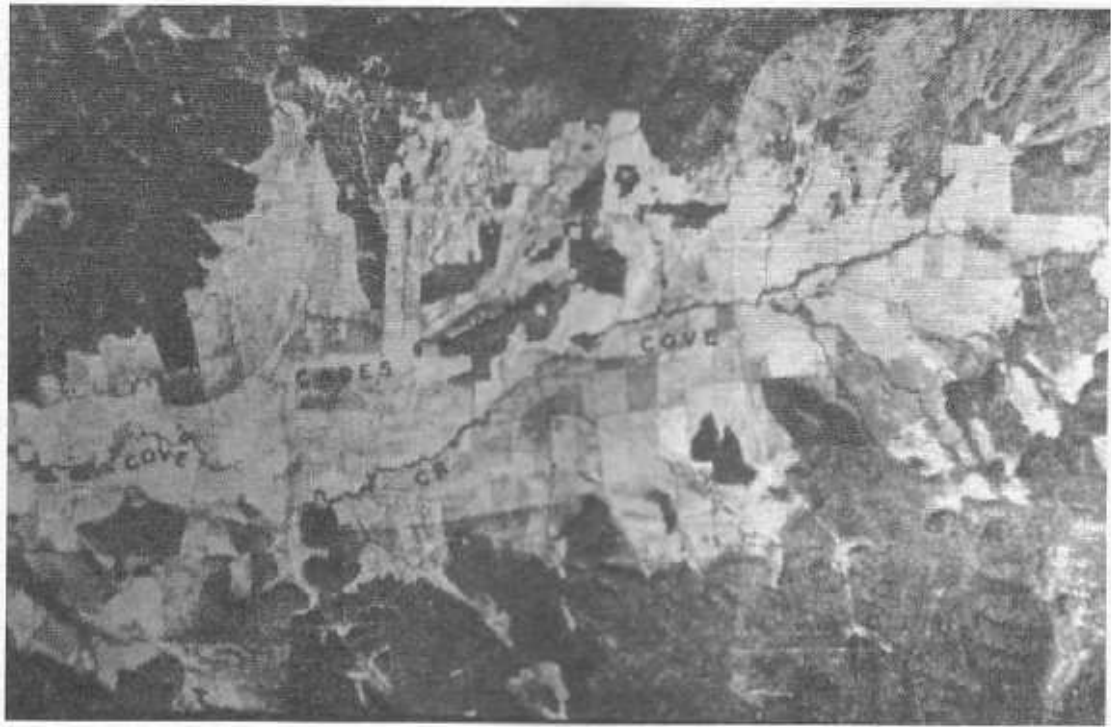


Illustration 4. Aerial photograph of Cades Cove before the creation of GSMNP. (Dennis McCarthy, "What Might Have Been," *Sightline* 3 (2002): 3).

and were permitted to reside in the valley. Ambitious plans in the 1940s called for in-depth interpretation of Cove buildings and material culture artifacts, and a museum of pioneer culture was proposed, however these plans were scaled back in their implementation. A dedicated indoor historical museum never materialized in the Smokies. As Daniel S. Pierce writes, "The hundreds of tub mills, spinning wheels, looms, long rifles, stills and other artifacts collected ... over the years remain in storage at various buildings scattered throughout the park, awaiting display in a museum that may never be built."<sup>191</sup> Instead, groups of historic buildings were preserved at a handful of locations throughout the park, with only a few buildings containing furnishings and objects.<sup>192</sup> Today visitors must rely principally on text and

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<sup>191</sup> Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 182.

<sup>192</sup> Of the ten building groups interpreted at Cades Cove, only the Gregg-Cable house contains furnishings. At the time of the author's visit in January 2008, these consisted of little more than a cast

images from posted signage and interpretive publications, such as the Cades Cove Auto Tour pamphlet, to imagine the cultural landscapes of the Smokies as they were during their periods of significance.

The late twentieth century saw management techniques that were attempts to harmonize historic preservation objectives with ecosystem management. Earlier mistakes – such as the introduction of exotic grasses in the interest of cattle grazing – were recognized as such and steps were taken to correct them. The legacy of the displacements in Cades Cove and throughout the Smokies echoed throughout the Appalachian South in the twentieth century, where people were displaced for park expansions and public works projects. The lessons learned from the unprecedented experiment in Cades Cove factored into improved preservation policy in the NPS, though the agency still struggles to fulfill its dual mandate to preserve the parks and provide for their enjoyment by the public, and to navigate the paradox of preserving human settlements within a “wilderness” park.

### ***Early Plans and Ideas***

In the early years of NPS management of GSMNP, the park system was experiencing unprecedented growth while solidifying its identity as an agency. No models existed for management of a resource such as Cades Cove. Established

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iron stove and curtains. Many of the barns in the cove contain some farming equipment, but the houses are totally empty, their open doors swinging in the breeze and their walls covered with graffiti. The author’s overall impression was of experiencing a ghost town. Michael Ann Williams and Larry Morrissey write: “The park service, even when it does attempt to furnish its historic structures within the Smokies, always fails to present the complex, multilayered, traditional use that was typical of the small homes that sheltered large families in the region.” They point out that Dolly Parton’s reconstructed Tennessee Mountain Home, with its “visual clutter” is perhaps a better representation: “The replication of the Parton home is a more accurate depiction of the way many lived in the Smokies when the park was created than any of the structures interpreted within the park’s boundaries.” While the park service has created a theme-park-like experience in Cades Cove, visitors to the area must enter Dollywood, an actual theme park, in order to see the most authentic representation of a furnished mountain home. Michael Ann Williams and Larry Morrissey, “Constructions of Tradition: Vernacular Architecture, County Music, and Auto-Ethnography,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, 8 (2000), 170-171.

policies which barred private holdings and encouraged naturalization were interpreted to mean that park residents would be removed, and that improved land would be returned to a natural state. However, Cades Cove was regarded as particularly scenic by many park boosters even before the establishment of GSMNP, and these aesthetic qualities would have been lost had the Cove been reclaimed by forest. In the pre-park years, boosters and NPS officials eyed Cades Cove with the intent of locating visitor facilities there. The boosters envisioned hotels and concessions, and the NPS officials would eventually develop a campsite. Total reforestation would have hampered the effort to build such facilities.

While the NPS took over administration of the park in 1931, GSMNP would not become an official unit of the park system until 1934. During these interim years, neither funding nor authorization existed for development, and basic enforcement of regulations was minimal. Fire, vandalism, and violation of fishing and hunting regulations were the principal challenges to Superintendent Eakin and his staff of four.<sup>193</sup> Colonel David C. Chapman, chair of the Tennessee commission, wrote to NPS Director Horace Albright in 1930 expressing his concern over the haphazard policies towards residents and lessees: “We are dealing with people who have occupied 3,000 separate pieces of land and in this twilight zone that now exists, it is imperative that general policies be more clearly outlined.”<sup>194</sup>

Local boosterism was a factor in park development from an early stage. In the early 1930s Cades Cove was threatened by a proposed dam which would create an

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<sup>193</sup> Margaret Lynn Brown, *Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 112.

<sup>194</sup> Col. David C. Chapman to Horace Albright, 20 February 1930, Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association Collection, GSMNP. Quoted in Margaret Lynn Brown, *Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 103.

artificial lake for boating and recreation.<sup>195</sup> At this time, NPS officials were divided into two camps representing the two sides of the service's dual mandate: those who prioritized development and those who championed preservation.<sup>196</sup> The "developers" wanted to dam Abrams Creek, the main waterway through the Cove, to create a "three-and-a-half-mile lake for swimming, boating, and fishing."<sup>197</sup> NPS Director Cammerer and GSMNP Superintendent Eakin initially supported the proposal, along with elected leaders in Knoxville, the Governor of Tennessee, and a number of local boosters who had the economic opportunities of boating and fishing in mind. Preservationists opposed the flooding of the Cove and worried that it would set a dangerous precedent for other national parks. The dam proposal was successfully defeated with the aid of nationally-known wilderness preservationists in a battle that resulted in the founding of the Wilderness Society.<sup>198</sup>

By the end of 1935, only twenty-one families (about twenty percent of the pre-park number) remained in Cades Cove on leases, and they were told that they would have to leave within a year. Twelve families were finally allowed to stay, so that after 1936, roughly ninety percent of the farms in the Cove had been abandoned with no plan in place to maintain the open fields.

A park service employee and future superintendent of GSMNP, Edward Hummel, suggested that Cades Cove be managed as a historical area "just like George Washington's birthplace and the Civil War sites" in the park system. During the late 1930s, NPS personnel tested the waters of preservation. These early efforts

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<sup>195</sup> According to a finding guide prepared by a library volunteer, the dam proposal first appears in the GSMNP archives in a December 30, 1933 resolution from the Great Smoky Mountains Conservation Association. Michael J. Doran, Finding Guide to the issue of a lake in Cades Cove, 23 March 1999, in GSMNP library and archives, Vertical File, Cades Cove 1930s.

<sup>196</sup> Dennis McCarthy, "What Might Have Been," *Sightline* 3 (2002): 3.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> Opponents of the dam proposal included Appalachian Trail founder Benton MacKaye, Aldo Leopold, and their co-founders of the Wilderness Society. The Wilderness Society also successfully fought the development of a roadway, inspired by the skyline drive that traverses Shenandoah National Park, in the Smokies. Dennis McCarthy, "What Might Have Been," *Sightline* 3 (2002): 3-4.

acknowledged the aesthetic and historical value of maintaining Cades Cove's open appearance, but historians and ethnographers during this time also hurried to document the lives of the departing mountaineers throughout the Park. GSMNP personnel and outside researchers alike collected handmade tools and objects, recorded oral histories and folk songs, and studied the unique dialect of the mountain people. They recognized that a distinct mountain culture was on the verge of annihilation as thousands of people left the Smoky Mountains. Park Ranger Phillip Hough began collecting objects as early as 1930, and wrote to NPS Director Horace Albright in 1933 urging the service to collect artifacts for exhibition.<sup>199</sup> As early as 1935, park staff members E.E. Exline and Charles S. Grossman began photographing the people, crafts, and architecture of the park communities. GSMNP officials "solicited assistance and information from former residents, outside consultants, workers, and resident permittees within the park" in order to record the disappearing mountain culture.<sup>200</sup> Several reports were prepared in the 1930s regarding museum development; museums dedicated to interpreting pioneer culture and Cherokee culture were proposed as separate from a museum on the natural history of the Smokies.<sup>201</sup>

As stated in chapter 2, the National Park Service was just beginning to get into the historic preservation "business" when it took over full administration of GSMNP in 1934. By this time, most of the mountain residents had left, and the Service's educational activities would not be supported by legal mandate until the 1935 Historic Sites Act. A Museum Division was also established in Washington that year.

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<sup>199</sup> Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 182.

<sup>200</sup> D. Dyer, "The Farmstead Yards at Cades Cove: restoration and management alternatives for the domestic landscape of the Southern Appalachian mountaineer" (Master of Landscape Architecture Thesis, University of Georgia, 1988), 34-35.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36. A 1935 report prepared by Lela and George McCoy was titled, "Some Suggestions for Museum Exhibits in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park"; another report that year was prepared by NPS Museum Curator Alden B. Stevens: "Preliminary Report on General Museum Development Plan."



Although CCC and other New Deal programs are credited with funding historians and museums in western parks and at battlefields, a historian wasn't immediately hired at GSMNP. This may be due to the fact that the Park was not authorized for full development until 1934, or because CCC activities there predictably focused on building the infrastructure needed to make the reservation accessible to the public. Attracting tourists would guarantee continued funding; shifting funds away from road construction and towards preservation and education would not ensure a continuing flood of visitors. Furthermore, those units of the park system where New Deal funding allowed for the construction of museums tended to be places where history was a major component, if not the sole purpose, for the park or monument; the Smokies, on the other hand, were recognized almost exclusively for their scenic grandeur.<sup>202</sup>

Early preservation efforts in the Smokies were also hampered by Superintendent Eakin's lack of interest. He was reluctant to preserve the open appearance of Cades Cove, only sending a CCC crew to cut back forest growth after "repeated complaints" by H.C. Wilburn; unsurprisingly, the superintendent "viewed the lessees and the empty cabins as management problems," not as valuable historic resources.<sup>203</sup> However, the "problem of preserving the mountain culture" of the Smokies was on the minds of NPS director Arno Cammerer and others at NPS headquarters. Cammerer wrote to Superintendent Eakin in February, 1938, telling him that the problem had been "under discussion for some time" in Washington and noting

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<sup>202</sup> The New Deal funded museums at Aztec Ruins and Scotts Bluff national monuments, Colonial and Morristown national historic parks, and Vicksburg, Guilford Courthouse, Shiloh, and Chickamunga and Chattanooga national military parks. Barry Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective*, History Division, National Park Service, Department of the Interior: Washington, D.C., 1986, 23.

<sup>203</sup> Margaret Lynn Brown, *Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 132-33.

that Eakin and his staff had been working at it for “several years.”<sup>204</sup> A memorandum of January 1938 directed Eakin to have his staff prepare a “Mountain Culture Program” covering all phases of recording and preserving historic resources, and recommending that a special group be formed to carry out the work.<sup>205</sup> This memorandum, prepared by the Acting Assistant Director, Chief Architect, Assistant Director, and Chief of the Museum Division, suggested that work focus on two areas that had been identified as sites for open-air building museums, one of which was Cades Cove. Later that year, park naturalist Arthur Stupka, landscape architect Charles S. Grossman, and CCC foreman H. C. Wilburn were commissioned to determine the best way to preserve the Smokies’ mountain culture. Their “Report on the Proposed Mountain Culture Program for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park” recommended the establishment of a museum of mountain culture as well as field exhibits, and proposed that former residents be called upon to demonstrate traditional crafts and farm work.<sup>206</sup>

The idea of an open-air museum took hold in the late 1930s as a solution to the problem of interpreting the mountain communities of the Smokies. The policies of the time allowed for buildings to be moved from more remote locations in the park, or for structures to be rebuilt entirely, in order to present “complete” homesteads. This idea owes much to its predecessors, including the reconstruction in the 1920s and 1930s of Colonial Williamsburg. NPS officials during the 1930s were also aware of an idea pioneered in Sweden – the living museum. Skansen, touted as the world’s first open-air museum, was founded in Stockholm in 1891 to demonstrate how people lived and

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<sup>204</sup> Arno B. Cammerer to J. Ross Eakin, 5 February 1938, in Folder XIV-10, Mountain Culture, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>205</sup> “Memorandum for the Director,” 17 January 1938, in Folder XIV-10, Mountain Culture, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>206</sup> H.C. Wilburn, C.S. Grossman, and A. Stupka, “Report on the Proposed Mountain Culture Program for the Great Smoky Mountains National Park,” June 28, 1938, in GSMNP Archives.

worked in different parts of the country throughout history.<sup>207</sup> To accomplish this, historic buildings were relocated to Skansen to create a “complete illusion” allowing visitors to “step into the past.”<sup>208</sup> An article appearing in the October-November 1939 issue of the NPS’s *Regional Review* discussed Skansen as well as the Norwegian Folkemuseum in Oslo.<sup>209</sup> A memorandum for Superintendent Eakin from H.C. Wilburn in December 1939 called attention to the article, saying that the living museums of Norway and Sweden were “quite comparable to that proposed for Great Smokies.”<sup>210</sup> The Skansen model relies on the assembly of an “historic” scene in order to create a visitor experience, rather than interpreting an unmodified historic site. This is a crucial distinction; the relocation and reconstruction of buildings to “complete” a homestead would not pass muster with many landscape and historic preservation professionals today but it allowed the Park Service to assemble historic areas in Cades Cove and elsewhere in the Smokies.

By the end of the 1930s, the “problem” of preserving mountain culture was debated both at GSMNP and in Washington. A 1939 press release from the Department of the Interior stated, “Unless [abandoned] structures are cared for, they will become ruins, and in time much information concerning the lives of white pioneers of this region will disappear completely.”<sup>211</sup> It goes on to outline the scope of Wilburn, Grossman, and Stupka’s proposed mountain culture program:

“The proposed program for preserving a more or less living record of this mountain culture, includes plans for the establishment of a central museum area and a number of field exhibits located in different parts of the national park. These exhibits would consist of groups of

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<sup>207</sup> Ralph Edenheim, *Skansen: Traditional Swedish Style*, (London: Scala Publications, 1995), 7.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>209</sup> D. Dyer, “The Farmstead Yards at Cades Cove: restoration and management alternatives for the domestic landscape of the Southern Appalachian mountaineer” (Master of Landscape Architecture Thesis, University of Georgia, 1988), 41.

<sup>210</sup> Memorandum for the Superintendent, 7 December 1939, in Folder XIV-10, Mountain Culture, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>211</sup> Untitled press release of 12 February 1939, enclosed in correspondence: Arthur Stupka to Fred McCuiston, 9 November 1943, in Folder XIV-10, Mountain Culture, GSMNP Archives.

original mountain buildings – cabins, barns, old mills, corn cribs, with all their surrounding fields, gardens, and orchards. ... Some of these old buildings have already been moved to selected sites by CCC enrollees...”

One can imagine that the CCC could have played a significant role in the preservation of buildings and landscapes in Cades Cove and throughout the park had World War II not diverted the Corps’ funding and staff to the military effort. The hectic pace of road and trail building was probably slowing by the end of the decade, allowing park administrators to shift focus to projects that rated lower on the list of priorities, such as interpretation. The most significant preservation accomplishment of the 1930s is undoubtedly the documentation of over 1,700 structures within the park boundary, due largely to the efforts of Charles S. Grossman.<sup>212</sup> Because of this achievement, a record exists of the diversity of building types extant in the park at the time of its establishment.

### ***The Plans of the 1940s***

In 1940, NPS Director Arno Cammerer wrote to Superintendent J. Ross Eakin, noting that, “Excellent progress was being made some time ago, especially in collecting materials for a folk museum or museum of mountain culture,” however, “the projects for preserving representative houses and house groups seem to be far down on the construction program priority list.”<sup>213</sup> Cammerer went on to request that Eakin’s staff develop a comprehensive program for “preservation, recording, and interpretation” of the Smokies’ disappearing mountain culture. The idea of a museum would be further developed during the 1940s, but, in a reversal of the condition noted

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<sup>212</sup> Michael Ann Williams and Larry Morrissey, “Constructions of Tradition: Vernacular Architecture, County Music, and Auto-Ethnography,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, 8 (2000), 168.

<sup>213</sup> Arno B. Cammerer, “Memorandum for the Superintendent,” 5 March 1940, in Folder XIV-10, Mountain Culture, GSMNP Archives.

in Cammerer's memorandum, the Service would in practice focus its interpretive efforts on the Park's historic structures.

The early 1940s were a period of intense discussion among GSMNP personnel and NPS officials in Washington regarding the best way to preserve the historic and cultural resources. Superintendent J. Ross Eakin addressed the feasibility of the Wilburn/Grossman/Stupka program in a 1940 memorandum for Director Cammerer:

“As Mr. Wilburn suggests, the park could not possibly swing this program, and if put into effect it could be done only by a concessionaire. I am in favor of restoring several pioneer groups of buildings on the lines planned for Cades Cove. I am not in favor of restoring detached buildings that may have some pioneer interest scattered over the entire park, principally for administrative reasons.”<sup>214</sup>

The difficulty of implementing the ambitious programs proposed by Wilburn, Grossman, and Stupka is apparent when considered in the context of the traditional reliance on concessionaires and the notoriously tight budgets of the individual parks. Assistant Wildlife Technician Willis King also expressed doubt about the proposed living exhibits, albeit from a different perspective than Eakin's: “When the people who lived and worked on the spot are gone, it is doubtful if any restoration can bring back the true atmosphere. Perhaps a “dead” authentic field exhibit would have more real appeal than a pepped-up restoration.”<sup>215</sup>

Regional Supervisor of Historic Sites Roy Edgar Appleman echoed Eakin's concerns for feasibility, yet believed that a mountain culture program should not be left to a concessionaire. His memorandum for the Regional Director summarizes the difficult task that faced administrators: “I believe it can also be said that most of us still are uncertain as to just how to go about developing an adequate program and keep

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<sup>214</sup> J. Ross Eakin, “Memorandum for the Director,” 23 April 1940, in Folder XIV-10, Mountain Culture, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>215</sup> Willis King, “Memorandum for the Superintendent,” 24 April 1940, in Folder XIV-10, Mountain Culture, GSMNP Archives.

it within the bounds of practical achievement.”<sup>216</sup> With the exception of Willis King’s unusual insight, correspondence indicates that the general consensus among higher-ups was that the 1938 program simply was not feasible.

Superintendent Eakin wrote to the Regional Director in 1940 expressing his and his staff’s inability to pursue any action beyond the preservation of a few structures, saying that preservation work was hampered by a lack of trained personnel to complete the required measured drawings.<sup>217</sup> A 1941 memorandum indicates Eakin’s readiness to address historic preservation at GSMNP: “In any new National Park the greatest personnel need is an adequate protection force. This has been practically achieved and we can now concentrate on pioneer culture history of the area.”<sup>218</sup> Eakin also asked that the Branch of Research and Interpretation devote attention to the plans for a mountain culture museum. The support of this branch was needed in order to proceed with the establishment of a museum, however, such support never materialized.

Although the 1938 plan prepared by Wilburn, Grossman, and Stupka was fairly detailed in its recommendations, a second study was commissioned. Dr. Hans Huth, a consultant to the Park Service on historic preservation, submitted his “Report on the Preservation of Mountain Culture in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park” in August, 1941. He, too, proposed a museum of mountain culture in addition to field exhibits with a living history component, suggesting that the 1938 plan be used as “the

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<sup>216</sup> Roy Edgar Appleman, “Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region One,” 16 May 1940, in Folder XIV-10, Mountain Culture, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>217</sup> J. Ross Eakin, “Memorandum for the Regional Director, Region One,” 14 August 1940, in Folder XIV-10, Mountain Culture, GSMNP Archives.

<sup>218</sup> J. Ross Eakin, “Memorandum for the Supervisor of Research and Interpretation,” 12 May 1941, in Folder XIV-10, Mountain Culture, GSMNP Archives.

basic plan for the development of the cultural features” of the park.<sup>219</sup> One excerpt from this report is particularly telling:

“The program provides for the preservation of a number of various groups of buildings. Some of these groups are incomplete or not well composed. That means that there is a farm group where the barn was destroyed or another group where the present farm house is modern, while the outbuildings are of an earlier period. ... Here ... *it is not desired to show the development of a farm group, but rather a typical one.*” (emphasis added)<sup>220</sup>

This statement indicates a decision having been made, formally or informally, that the period of significance for Cades Cove and other communities in the Park would have a cutoff date some time before the year 1930, not to mention the implicit assumption that “typical” farmsteads did not embody change over time. Huth goes on to recommend that farmsteads be “completed” if necessary by moving in structures from other parts of the Park which would otherwise be left to deteriorate, yet keeping in mind that “moving buildings is not the ideal procedure for preservationists.”<sup>221</sup>

While Park officials and hired experts were debating the best means of preserving the cultural resources, very little physical action was taken in conserving the landscape or historic structures. Forest was rapidly encroaching on the former pastures and fields of Cades Cove. In typical fashion, the NPS sought to remedy the problem through private enterprise, and in 1945, leases were granted for several former residents to return to the Cove in order to help maintain its open appearance through grazing and cultivation. The leasing system, originally intended as a mechanism to ease the mountaineers’ transition out of the park and to protect the elderly from being forced to move, was recast as a means of keeping the Cove open. Leasing helped the Service continue its long tradition of relying on private interests, or

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<sup>219</sup> Hans Huth, “Report on the Preservation of Mountain Culture in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.” August 1941, GSMNP Archive, 4.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

concessionaires, whenever possible in order to accomplish certain management and development goals. These residents, while returning to the Cove to make their living, were not the “living history” envisioned in the 1938 and 1941 reports. For one thing, traditional activities such as hunting, fishing, and the gathering of wild plants was prohibited, thus precluding a truly authentic recreation of pioneer living. Furthermore, many of the lessees used modern equipment and buildings, which were shielded from the view of the visiting public. Today the modern methods used to keep the Cove open continue to be screened from view – mowing takes place during hours when the loop road is closed to vehicular traffic.

The same year in which selected former residents were granted leases to return to Cades Cove, it was designated a “historical area” by the NPS. After fifteen years of decision-making and report-writing, the agency was finally ready to develop Cades Cove as an historical attraction, and by the end of the decade, a definite policy was beginning to coalesce. An “Interpretive Prospectus” covering the entire Park was drafted in 1946; it reiterated many of the recommendations of earlier reports, proposing both field exhibits and a museum. The idea of living history was disposed of, and instead the buildings at Cades Cove would be unfurnished and accessible only on the exterior. At the Cable Mill complex, more intensive development and some interior furnishings would be included. In 1948, GSMNP Superintendent Blair A. Ross drafted a “Development Outline” for Cades Cove, stating, “the cultural development program of the Cove will include a static architectural exhibit of buildings and grounds as an adjunct to the agricultural program which will preserve the open aspect of the area.”<sup>222</sup> The outline recommended the removal of structures at the Gregory place in Cades Cove which were “not of the period of those recognized

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<sup>222</sup> Blair A. Ross, “Draft of Cades Cove Development Outline,” July 15, 1948, in Trout 13 Historian’s Files: Cades Cove, GSMNP Archive.



for preservation.” Even at this late date, twenty years after the purchase of Cove farms began, the appearance of the landscape and the fate of its buildings were still being decided.

### ***Management Policies in the Later Twentieth Century***

Although a management plan was established by the end of the 1940s, the remainder of the twentieth century was characterized by new ideas and changing policies in Cades Cove, and conflicts between natural conservation and historic preservation continued. The distinction drawn in Superintendent Ross’s 1948 outline between the “architectural exhibit” and the agricultural program is important. After Cades Cove’s development accelerated in the late 1940s, maintenance of the Cove’s open appearance was overseen not by preservationists or historians but by the Soil Conservation Service (SCS). Thus, the architecture and the landscape were conceptually separated, and were managed separately.

In 1946, a program was undertaken to “perpetuate the scene of Cades Cove area as it was when the park was established.”<sup>223</sup> Oddly, as Margaret Lynn Brown suggests, the “scene” that was perpetuated was more suited to popular notions of western ranches than it was to the reality of Cades Cove in 1926. The NPS, along with the SCS, planted nonnative grasses and managed the entire Cove as “one big farm” with minimal plant variety, in contrast to the patchwork appearance documented in historical photographs.<sup>224</sup> The result of the introduction of exotic species was that native grasses and wild plants, many of them rare, survived only on small plots that

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<sup>223</sup> Memorandum to regional director from O.B. Taylor, 29 July 1946, Resource Management Files, Box III-I, GSMNP. Quoted in Margaret Lynn Brown, *Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 203.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

were left uncultivated. Cattle grazing, practiced historically by pre-park Cove farmers but recreated on a vastly larger scale under the NPS, greatly damaged water quality.

The living history idea, dismissed by the late '40s as impractical and costly, was revived during the Service-wide boom in living history programs in the wake of the Mission 66 initiative.<sup>225</sup> In Cades Cove, crafts demonstrations and milling could be observed at the Cable Mill complex during the summer months. In 1968, forty-one areas in the park system reported some kind of living history activity. Reenactments, demonstrations, and period dress were embraced by both park administrators and the visiting public, however, after a few years, these programs were criticized for creating “sanitized” versions of history and for distracting from the underlying interpretive messages. In the 1970s and 1980s stricter standards were written into Park Service interpretive policy.<sup>226</sup> Living history programs survive at Cades Cove, where demonstrations of domestic chores are suited to the place and its history.

Mission 66 funding was also used to improve roads and campgrounds in Cades Cove, encouraging more tourists to pour into the valley. Whereas early park advocates worried that few people would be willing to travel the extra miles to visit the Cove, less than fifty years later it became one of the most-visited attractions in the entire Park. The Mission 66 construction boom sought to relieve demands on outdated park infrastructure, but critics worried that the resulting overbuilding was an even greater threat to the parks. Today, Cades Cove receives so many visitors by automobile that congestion on the loop road often creates gridlock conditions.

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<sup>225</sup> Mission 66 was an NPS initiative launched in 1955 to improve park facilities throughout the system by the fiftieth anniversary of the agency's creation. In the postwar years, as Americans enjoyed increased leisure time and wealth, parks across the nation became overcrowded and the NPS funneled money towards expanding visitor accommodations and amenities. The Mission 66 construction boom was rethought in the 1970s, as it became apparent that overuse was a serious threat to the parks.

<sup>226</sup> Barry Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: History Division, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1986), 60, 63, 66.

As the Park Service's infatuation with living history waned in the 1970s, environmental problems replaced development as the agency's major concern. On one hand, GSMNP and other parks suffered from the introduction of exotic species and the legacies of past management mistakes, as well as from pollution and other external threats. On the other hand, the National Park System doubled in size with the addition of protected lands in Alaska and new types of units such as National Scenic Rivers.

In the 1950s and '60s the Soil Conservation Service had drained wetlands in Cades Cove and allowed the introduction of nonnative grasses by leaseholders.<sup>227</sup> In keeping with new research-based management policies which sought to maintain natural, functioning ecosystems in the parks, the NPS in the 1990s adopted a policy of restoring native plants to the Cove and eliminating exotic species. This involved removing the grass species introduced by the SCS, but the pre-park residents of the Cove had introduced nonnative food crops and ornamental plants during the historical period of significance. This illustrates one way in which historical accuracy has conflicted with ecosystem management goals in Cades Cove.

In contrast with the pre-park appearance and impression of Cades Cove given in the Introduction to Chapter 2, a visitor to the Cove in the 1950s or '60s would have encountered a radically altered scene. Several hundred structures, or approximately ninety percent, had been cleared from the landscape along with almost all other features of twentieth century life. The patchwork appearance of the valley floor had given way to a single large pasture. Cattle no longer grazed on the balds, but instead on the Cove floor, and in far greater numbers than in pre-park days. The implements and equipment associated with daily life had vanished from the porches and yards of the farmsteads. In place of farm animals, the 1950s visitor would likely have seen

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<sup>227</sup> Dennis McCarthy, "What Might Have Been," *Sightline* 3 (2002): 5.

deer or even bear; both were rare in 1926 due to hunting. Rather than an active community, the Cove would have been quiet and still except for tourists' automobiles. Although the farmers were gone, the contrast of the open valley to the high mountaintops continued to give Cades Cove its distinctive beauty.

### *Cades Cove Today*

The Park Service has been criticized, by scholars and lay people alike, for its narrow interpretation of mountain life in Cades Cove. In destroying all traces of twentieth-century life in the Cove, the NPS inadvertently painted a picture of its inhabitants as backwards, isolated, "contemporary ancestors." Jerry Glenn Cunningham, grandson of Cove resident Andrew W. Shields Jr., wrote to GSMNP Superintendent George W. Fry in 1966, claiming to represent a group of former inhabitants. He decried the "counterfeit history" promulgated by the Service and asked that frame buildings be reconstructed to accurately depict life in the Cove as it was in the 1920s.<sup>228</sup> A handwritten note accompanying the letter in the Park archives admits, "There is probably an element of truth ... in that the NPS has probably overemphasized the pioneer aspect of the Cove without giving equal emphasis to the fact that, at the time the land became a National Park, farm houses were as well built as any other farm houses in [Blount] County."<sup>229</sup>

The "hands-off" approach that nearly led to the reforestation of Cades Cove in the 1930s lingered in some ways throughout the remainder of the twentieth century. The "restoration" of the farmsteads envisioned by Wilburn, Grossman, Stupka, and

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<sup>228</sup> Jerry Glenn Cunningham to George W. Fry, 27 December 1966, in Trout Historian's Files, Cades Cove, GSMNP Archive.

<sup>229</sup> Morrell, "Comments on Jerry Cunningham's letter," in Trout Historian's Files, Cades Cove, GSMNP Archive.

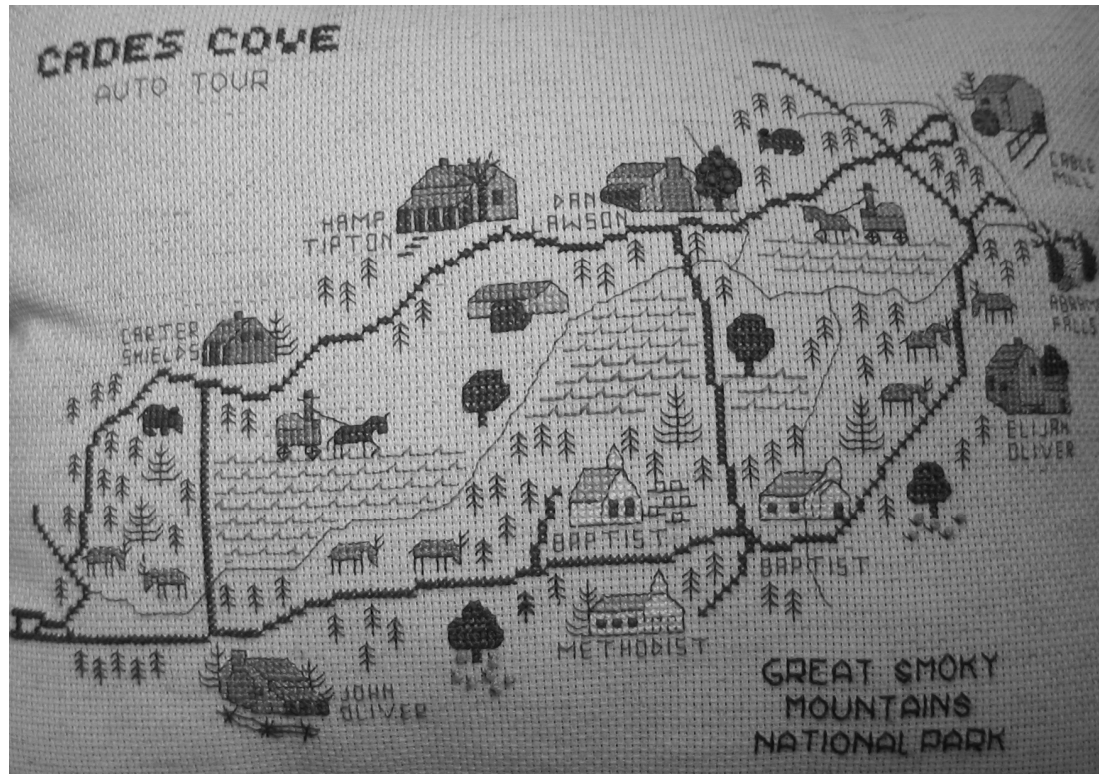


Illustration 5. The Cades Cove Auto Tour Loop Road as depicted in a cross-stitch pattern sold at the Cable Mill Visitor Center. (Photograph by the author).

Huth was never fully realized. Instead, the structures that comprise the ten building groups, with the noted exception of the Cable Mill area, are preserved as if they were insect specimens pinned to a board. Stripped of their contexts, they are shells of the activity and history that occurred in and around them. Aside from the maintenance needed to keep the structures from deteriorating, the hands-off approach prevails, for budgetary if not for aesthetic reasons.<sup>230</sup>

<sup>230</sup> For more information about the loss of context around structures in Cades Cove, see D. Dyer, "The Farmstead Yards at Cades Cove: restoration and management alternatives for the domestic landscape of the Southern Appalachian mountaineer" (Master of Landscape Architecture Thesis, University of Georgia, 1988).



Illustration 6. Like the other architectural exhibits on the Cades Cove Loop Road, the Dan Lawson Place is unfurnished and retains few landscape elements which speak to the lives of its former occupants. (Photograph by the author).

### ***Policy Implications***

The establishment of GSMNP came at a time of upheaval in the Appalachian South. Government projects in the twentieth century were on a scale that hadn't been seen before, and electrification and improved transportation wrought profound change in small communities. Significant numbers of people were migrating to urban areas. The federal government was beginning to take a more active role in managing public lands by regulating their use and enforcing such regulations. Shortly before the movement to establish the Park, it had been inconceivable for the federal government to purchase such a vast amount of private land, but by the 1930s the invocation of eminent domain had become more widespread.

The Smokies experience was a precursor to other displacements during and after the Great Depression. The 1926 bill that authorized GSMNP also authorized Mammoth Cave National Park and Shenandoah National Park. Shenandoah was prized for its proximity to population centers, and its history parallels that of GSMNP. Hundreds of families were removed from their homes, and, as in the Smokies, a few were allowed to remain on lifetime leases; the last resident died in 1979. Also as in the Smokies, the bitterness associated with the forced removals of families persists. The tinkering with history observed in GSMNP also occurred in Shenandoah; the historical scene at Mabry's Mill, Virginia, involved the demolition of frame houses and the introduction of log structures from elsewhere, as well as the removal of electrical systems that had been installed by the mill owner.<sup>231</sup> As at GSMNP, the primary management concern at Shenandoah was to restore the natural ecosystem:

“If the NPS had any cultural resource management philosophy here at all, it was to deny the presence, or at least the significance, of park cultural resources. Signs of prior human use were seen as interfering with nature's reclamation of these ‘damaged’ lands.”<sup>232</sup>

This statement also rings true if read in the context of GSMNP – historic resources were a distraction next to the incredible task of shaping an eastern wilderness out of the Smokies' patchwork of farms, forest, and mountain slopes devastated by logging and fire. Other similarities between the two parks include the depiction of mountain residents in the popular media as backwards and ignorant, the significant influence of local boosters who saw dollar signs in their visions of the new parks, and a lack of comprehensive plans for development at the outset. Once Shenandoah residents left the mountains, “Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees dismantled their homes, farms, stores,

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<sup>231</sup> John Alexander Williams, *Appalachia: A History* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 299.

<sup>232</sup> Bob Krumenaker, “Cultural Resource Management at Shenandoah: It Didn't Come Naturally,” *Cultural Resource Management*, 21(1998) No. 1, 4.

churches, schools, and mills,” retaining a few old log structures.<sup>233</sup> Like GSMNP, Shenandoah’s communities encompassed a range of socioeconomic classes. In Weakley and Nicholson Hollows, farmers produced “significant” surpluses, allowing a level of prosperity approximating that enjoyed by the residents of Cades Cove, but the poorest residents were portrayed as representative of the entire area.<sup>234</sup>

The creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in 1933 initiated an entirely new wave of displacements for the construction of flood control and hydroelectric dams. For the people of East Tennessee and Western North Carolina, the “experience of removal was to become increasingly common,” indeed, the displacements at GSMNP “proved to be only the opening wave, as the presence of the federal government increased throughout the region.”<sup>235</sup> The unlucky Whaley family of the Greenbrier area of the Smokies was first displaced by the arrival of the Park, then again from Norris, Tennessee, by dam construction, and again from Oak Ridge, Tennessee, by the Manhattan Project before finally settling in Pigeon Forge.<sup>236</sup>

Construction of Fontana Dam just south of GSMNP in the 1940s resulted in the displacement of 6,500 people from Swain and Graham Counties in North Carolina. The Tennessee Valley Authority, “Waving the flag of national defense,”<sup>237</sup> took advantage of broad powers of eminent domain to secure not only the lands that would be inundated, but also those lands that would be cut off from road access by the reservoir and essentially marooned between it and the Park boundary. The TVA

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<sup>233</sup> Audrey Horning, “Almost Untouched: Recognizing, Recording, and Preserving the Archeological Heritage of a National Park,” *Cultural Resource Management*, 21(1998) No. 1, 31.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>235</sup> Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 172.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Margaret Lynn Brown, *Wild East: A Biography of the Great Smoky Mountains*, (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2000), 145.



undoubtedly learned from the eight dams it had already built, but the John Oliver court case and resistance to land purchases throughout the Smokies were surely on the minds of Fontana's planners. There was an explicit connection between the experience of the two state commissions in GSMNP and the condemnation practices of TVA. Having learned from the difficult time agents had in buying some of the lots for the Park, TVA secured "extraordinary" powers of eminent domain.<sup>238</sup> Contrary to usual eminent domain practices in the U.S., this agency was permitted to conduct its own condemnation proceedings and to avoid jury trials in the case of a challenge. The results of this policy were staggering: "by TVA's own calculations, this aggressive approach to land-buying saved the agency 60 percent off fair market value for property."<sup>239</sup> TVA's purchases for the Fontana project were efficient, and aided by the impending inundation once the dam was complete; in some cases people left their homes with only days to spare before rising waters covered their land or cut off road access.

The rural communities that were obliterated by the dam were "not unlike Cataloochee or Cades Cove;"<sup>240</sup> they supported churches, schools, and grocery stores. Contemporary portrayals of the people living below the high water mark echo the stereotyping used to justify the GSMNP removals. The soon-to-be-displaced residents of three of the communities were described by a TVA caseworker as "pioneers living for many years practically isolated from the rest of the world," while period photographs instead show them as rural residents typical of the 1940s.<sup>241</sup> Just as Cove residents questioned the necessity of the Cove's inclusion in the Park, residents *above* the high water mark of Fontana Dam questioned the necessity of the purchase

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 157.

of their land. TVA justified this taking by asserting that the high cost of restoring road access was unwarranted by the small number of people the road would serve. The North Shore lands – those sandwiched between the reservoir and the Park boundary – were transferred to the NPS and were absorbed into the Park. The Department of the Interior promised in 1943 to construct a road which would slice across the southern portion of the Park from Fontana Dam to Bryson City, allowing former residents to visit the gravesites of loved ones on North Shore lands. However, the road was never completed and its fate is still being argued. Local people perceived this as yet another broken promise, and this has added to the legacy of distrust and bitterness towards the federal government felt by people in the Smokies region.

The National Park Service's policy towards historic preservation has been refined over nearly a century, and today's Service-wide policy differs in substantial ways from the ad hoc policies and precedents of the early twentieth century. The Service now recognizes that historic resources "may exist, in varying degree, in those units of the System classified as natural areas and recreational areas," and administrative preservation policies apply to all historic resources regardless of location.<sup>242</sup> Had this been the explicit policy before 1930, would Cades Cove or any other area in the Smokies have fared any better? Perhaps it would have stemmed the tide of destruction, but in the race to clean up the damaged landscape and "open up" the Park to visitors, it is hard to imagine that Superintendent Eakin's under-funded staff could have accomplished much. Today's policy also states: "As to a historic structure, it is often better to retain genuine old work of several periods, which may have cultural values in themselves, than to restore the whole to its aspect at a single

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<sup>242</sup> National Park Service, "Administrative Policies for the Historical Areas of the National Park System," National Park Service.  
[http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/admin\\_policies/policy1-part1.html](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/admin_policies/policy1-part1.html).

period.”<sup>243</sup> While any post-1880 construction wouldn’t have qualified as historic in 1930 (using a 50-year guideline), a recognition of the significance of change over time might have resulted in a more sympathetic treatment of Cades Cove and the preservation of a broader range of building types representing changing construction methods throughout the Park. Modern preservation practice also stresses the importance of historic landscape features in their own right and as context for historic structures; many of the landscape features of Cades Cove extant at the founding of the Park have never been recovered.

The NPS experience in dealing with the contradictory character of the Smokies –of pockets of pristine wilderness side-by-side with farming communities and industry – coupled with the management decisions that shaped the Cades Cove that visitors know today has had significant impacts on Service-wide policies. Put one way, the Park Service learned a number of invaluable lessons from the Smokies experience. Today, the Service acknowledges change as an undeniable characteristic of historic landscapes, and rural historic landscapes are recognized as a distinct type of historic resource. Cultural resource management policies have been crafted to protect such resources. Rural historic districts have been overlooked in the past because they often don’t easily conform to traditional notions of “historic.”<sup>244</sup> A wealth of literature and guidelines about cultural resources is available today, largely through the efforts of the Park Service, which values historic rural places. This body of knowledge was not even dreamed of when Wilburn, Grossman, and Stupka wrote their report in 1938.

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<sup>243</sup> Ibid.

<sup>244</sup> Robert Z. Melnick, *Cultural Landscapes: Rural Historic Districts in the National Park System* (Washington, D.C.: Park Historic Architecture Division, Cultural Resources Management, National Park Service, 1984), 10.

## ***Conclusion***

The acquisition of Cades Cove and a handful of other historic areas in GSMNP appears to be the first time in national park history that the NPS was faced with the challenge of preserving rural historic resources in a wilderness setting and interpreting those resources to the public. A “hands-off” approach gradually morphed into master-planned management as the Service’s priorities in Cades Cove changed from a focus on recreation and aesthetic appeal to a focus on preservation and interpretation.

The development of an interpretive program for Cades Cove and the treatment of historic resources throughout the Park suffered from unfortunate timing – these places would be the testing grounds for the development of historic preservation policies by the NPS. The old homesteads were at their most vulnerable immediately after their owners moved away, and these precarious years occurred just before the Park Service fully entered the sphere of historic preservation with the 1933 reorganization and the new mandate conveyed in the 1935 Historic Sites Act. Just as Park Service officials became increasingly aware of Cades Cove’s significance and value in the 1930s, and were finally prepared to act in the 1940s, the funding and labor that might have been available through New Deal programs disappeared as the United States entered World War II.<sup>245</sup>

The establishment of GSMNP tested the limits of eminent domain, and the heirs to the Smokies displacement, as shown at Fontana Dam, learned much from the

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<sup>245</sup> Between 1940 and 1941, the bulk of Civilian Conservation Corps activities shifted, from building trails and facilities in national and state parks, to clearing airfields and artillery ranges on military bases. It became more difficult to attract enrollees, who were finding better-paid work in national defense industries. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, non-defense-related CCC projects were terminated by the NPS. National and state park development projects ground to a near halt, and regular maintenance and fire protection also suffered. John C. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History*, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, 1985. [http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online\\_books/ccc/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/ccc/index.htm).

experience. The TVA enjoyed expanded powers, and used the lessons learned at GSMNP to secure timely sales at cheap prices on projects throughout the region.

The postwar era brought new challenges to management at Cades Cove and throughout the park system. The war had necessitated a hiatus in park development, and the Mission 66 program attempted to ramp up construction to meet the burgeoning demand as Americans flocked to the parks in the 1950s and 1960s. During this enthusiastic period, living history was embraced as an effective tool to capture visitors' attention at historic sites. A living history program had been proposed for Cades Cove as early as 1938, and was finally implemented. Mission 66 was criticized for enabling overbuilding and crowding; Cades Cove in peak season is a striking example of the crowding that occurs at the most popular sites in the park system.

Due to budgetary constraints in the 1940s, the NPS chose to manage Cades Cove's open fields and pastures through a leasing system. While this accomplished the goal of maintaining the Cove's open appearance, the "one big farm" approach and the introduction of nonnative grass species effectively erased the historic patchwork appearance of the valley. A growing awareness of ecosystem management in the park system in the 1990s led to a program to restore Cades Cove's native grasses.

Cades Cove has served as a testing ground and a learning opportunity for the NPS. In the end, the Service's management and interpretation of the Cove appears just as haphazard as the Tennessee National Park Commission's acquisition of the land and displacement of its residents. But, each successive change in management throughout the twentieth century represents a distinct moment in the agency's history and evolution.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

A Euro-American farming community was born at Cades Cove in the mountains of East Tennessee in 1818, and was extinguished barely a century later. Its inhabitants, some of them descendants of the first settlers, were forced from their homes, and all traces of their typical, early-twentieth century livelihoods were erased. The oldest structures, however, were reconfigured and preserved as a record of an imagined frontier community. I undertook this exploration to answer the question: why did the National Park Service intentionally erase this place's history? I have concluded that the tragic occurrences at Cades Cove – the eviction of its residents and the wholesale destruction of its history – actually appear rational and inevitable given the circumstances. The Park Service lacked any clear guideline for creating a wilderness park in the East, and standard practice dictated that no private inholdings could remain within the park boundaries. The story of Cades Cove is unfortunate, but it is an experience from which the NPS learned a great deal.

It is difficult to imagine the creation of an eastern park on the scale of GSMNP today. The time for the establishment of such parks is past, so it is impossible to know how today's Park Service would approach the kind of problem that Cades Cove presented in the 1930s and '40s. The Cades Cove preserved by the Park Service is a product of changing policies over time, as well as of the particular ideas that drove the agency and a host of individuals to push for a National Park in the Smokies. Most importantly, the lack of any comparable precedent within the Park System made Cades Cove and other historic areas in GSMNP the testing grounds for historic preservation in wilderness parks. Cades Cove's significance derives from its remaining collection of nineteenth-century structures, but it can be argued that it is also significant as the embodiment of changing Park Service policy over the past century. Just as early-

twentieth century park architecture is now recognized as historic for its association with park planning during a distinct period of American history, Cades Cove can similarly be recognized as a physical record of Park Service historic preservation history.

The title of this study speaks to an overarching theme in Cades Cove's recent history: timing. The creation of GSMNP (along with Shenandoah and Mammoth Cave National Parks) was an unprecedented move at a time when expanding governmental powers and a perceived need to preserve wild lands allowed state governments to convert private land to wilderness. This window of opportunity for the creation of eastern wilderness parks in mountainous areas occurred after the NPS was authorized by the 1916 Organic Act and before industrialization of the South in the mid-twentieth century would have rendered such a feat impossible.<sup>246</sup> The Great Depression and New Deal represented another window of opportunity that affected Cades Cove's historic landscape. The CCC, with New Deal funding, proved to be both a blessing and a curse for preservation in Cades Cove, as it expedited building demolitions but also provided labor for the documentation of buildings that are now lost. The years between the exodus of Cove residents and the preservation of the landscape (the "hands-off" years during which much of the Cove's historic landscape features were lost), perhaps represent a window of lost opportunity.

Since the Second World War, park personnel have sought to reverse the damage wrought in the early years of Park Service management of Cades Cove. For much of the twentieth century, grazing leases were the preferred means of maintaining

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<sup>246</sup> Only three new National Parks have been established in the East since Great Smoky Mountains, Shenandoah, and Mammoth Cave National Parks: Everglades National Park in Florida (1934,) Congaree Swamp National Park in South Carolina (1976,) and Biscayne National Park in Florida (1980.) These three are all in swamp or marine environments. Other NPS wild lands in the Mid-Atlantic and Southeast designated since GSMNP have been National Seashores, National Rivers, National Scenic Rivers, and National Recreation Areas. National Park Service, "National Park System Timeline," <http://www.nps.gov/history/history/hisnps/NPSHistory/timeline.htm>.

the Cove's open appearance. Recently, the initiative to rid the Cove of exotic grasses and restore native species represents a step in the right direction, though it is not immune to the contradictions that arise between historic preservation and ecosystem management.

It is hoped that this study will add to the body of work that continues to grow as Cades Cove approaches the bicentennial of its settlement by Euro-Americans. Earlier work has focused on the Cove's unique history or on specific management policies and techniques. This study, hopefully, situates the recent history of Cades Cove in a larger context – that of a relatively new federal agency addressing the challenge of recognizing and managing a new kind of resource in a new kind of park, then adjusting policy while developing an historic preservation ethic.

One obvious limit of this study is that there are few places with which to compare Cades Cove. A future study might compare GSMNP and New York State's Adirondack Forest Preserve as two solutions to similar problems. The Adirondacks were given state constitutional protection in 1885, largely in response to downstate concerns over deforestation and flooding (the Adirondack watershed provides water to New York City and the Hudson Valley). But, unlike at GSMNP, people residing within the park boundary were not moved from their homes. The entire preserve was made a National Historic Landmark in 1963. Today over 130,000 people reside in the park year-round, scattered through dozens of hamlets and villages.<sup>247</sup> The Adirondacks contain designated wilderness areas alongside modern communities – an example, perhaps, of what might have been at GSMNP. Future studies might also link more closely the lessons learned at GSMNP to TVA projects that followed in the region, and to other large-scale displacements.

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<sup>247</sup> New York State Adirondack Park Agency, "more about the Adirondack Park..." [http://www.apa.state.ny.us/About\\_park/more\\_park.html](http://www.apa.state.ny.us/About_park/more_park.html).



Although the Park Service was constrained by precedent and circumstance in choosing the fate of Cades Cove, we may still imagine an alternate outcome. The likelihood that the Cove would have developed into a tacky, crowded tourist stop on par with Gatlinburg, Tennessee, causes one to wonder whether the sacrifices of the Park residents might be redeemed by the prevention of such an outcome. After all, Cades Cove has retained its scenic qualities despite losing much of its human history. The Park Service could have allowed the mountain people to stay, but with the provision that the land would remain in agricultural use. The Cove would not have become a tourist trap, but nor would it have become a ghost town. We might imagine a living rural historic district, like Burke's Garden in Tazewell County, Virginia. The Burke's Garden Rural Historic District was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1986.<sup>248</sup> It bears some similarities to Cades Cove; both are high valleys completely surrounded by mountain ridges, and historically both were farming communities. Reportedly, Burke's Garden residents refused to sell their extraordinarily fertile land to the Vanderbilt family for the creation of a family estate in the late nineteenth century; the Biltmore Estate was located instead in Asheville, North Carolina.<sup>249</sup> Today about 300 people reside in Burke's Garden, and the valley remains in agricultural use.<sup>250</sup> Although the concept of a rural historic district did not yet exist at the time of the creation of GSMNP, if the mountain people had been allowed to stay, the farming communities of the Smokies could have eventually gained this protection. Cades Cove might have been, like Burke's Garden, a living farming community in the twenty-first century.

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<sup>248</sup> National Register of Historic Places, "Virginia-Tazewell County-Historic Districts" <http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/VA/Tazewell/districts.html>.

<sup>249</sup> Louise B. Leslie and Terry W. Mullins, *Images of America: Burke's Garden*, (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 18.

<sup>250</sup> Dan Casey, "Burke's Garden's Earthly Delights," *The Roanoke Times*, November 1, 1998. <http://www.roanoke.com/outdoors/biking/road/wb/4915>.

Today, Cades Cove boasts a visitor center and RV campsite in addition to the nineteenth-century barns and homes that have been preserved by the NPS and presented, in T. Young's words "as an exemplary regional past where life was environmentally proper and existentially satisfying."<sup>251</sup> The Cove looks very different than it did when families began leaving in 1928. Hundreds of buildings no longer exist, and older buildings have been relocated from elsewhere in the Park. The varied character of the Cove's fields has been totally lost and the implements associated with daily life are gone. Over more than three quarters of a century, the landscape has been neglected, reconfigured, reconstructed, and reinterpreted.

But, the community bonds that were severely tested by the relocation of Park residents still exist. As recently as 2000, descendants of Smokies residents held annual reunions each summer.<sup>252</sup> In this way, they maintain a sense of connection to the land that their parents and grandparents cherished so dearly. A Park Service publication offers a fitting summary of the legacy of the Park communities: "The story of the Great Smokies is ... most especially and significantly, a story of people and their home."<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> T. Young, "False, cheap and degraded: when history, economy and environment collided at Cades Cove, Great Smoky Mountains National Park," *Journal of Historical Geography* 32 (2006): 170.

<sup>252</sup> Daniel S. Pierce, *The Great Smokies: From Natural Habitat to National Park* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 171.

<sup>253</sup> National Park Service, Division of Publications, *At Home in the Smokies: A History Handbook for Great Smoky Mountains National Park* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, 1984), 18.

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